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THE

COLUMBIAN PREACHER;

OR,

A COLLECTION OF

Original Sermons,

FROM

PREACHERS OF EMINENCE

IN THE UNITED STATES.

EMBRACING

THE DISTINGUISHING DOCTRINES OF GRACE.

VOLUME I.

CATSKILL,

PUBLISHED BY NATHAN ELLLIOT

1808.

Tappan Pres. Assocn.
9f
7-15-1924

TO THE PUBLIC.

IN presenting this volume to the public, we deem it proper to accompany it with a few observations.

Though the public are already in possession of many valuable collections of sermons, it is nevertheless necessary that new publications should constantly be made, to answer the increasing demand, and to supply the places of those which are yearly growing into disuse.

The curiosity in the human mind for that which is novel, will incline many to read a new book, to the neglect of an old one of equal merit. No exertion should be spared to excite the attention of a 'world lying in wickedness,' or to allure the reluctant mind to receive spiritual instruction.

A volume containing the works of many preachers, eminent in the sacred profession, and resident in different parts of the United States, and exhibiting a specimen of their respective talents and must afford a pleasing variety, and be more inesting to the reader, than a volume from a single author.

One important object of this undertaking is to bring to public view many valuable discourses in manuscript, which after once powerfully impressing and delighting one auditory, would otherwise be of no further use to the world.

It is the design, of the editor that this collection shall clearly exhibit the distinguishing doctrines of grace and that nothing opposed to these (as we conceive) shall be admitted.

In collecting this volume, we have had to encounter difficulties which will not probably occur in the

further prosecution of the plan. Several gentlemen, on whose aid and encouragement we were authorized particularly to depend, have been hindered by ill health or an uncommon press of parocial duty, from preparing their manuscripts in season. To remedy this evil, we have in a few instances inserted some of their sermons possessing uncommon merit, which had been before published only in pamphlets, and therefore not generally read.

This volume is aided by the talents of but a small proportion of the great number of Clergymen of eminence in the United States. Should gentlemen of talents in the ministry see fit generally, to aid hereafter in the undertaking, we hope to gratify the public with a succession of American sermons, and to make our readers acquainted with a larger circle of preachers of distinguished eminence.

The discourses in this volume, the Editor thinks, are calculated to be useful, and will be received by all lovers of gospel truth, as a very valuable acquisition. He acknowledges himself under great obligations to an able, and pious gentleman in the ministry, who has rendered him aid, and earnestly hopes, that he may find his reward in the good this volume may effect in the hands of that God who works by the instrumentality of means.

That it may be read with candor, and be useful to the world, is the sincere wish of the Editor

NATHAN ELLIOT.

CATSKILL, July, 30, 1808.

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ERRATA.

Page. 43. 3 line from bottom, read *teſtimony* for teſtmony.
62. 8 line from top, read, heaven *in* the ſoul."
73. 6 line from bottom, omit the word *in*.
101. in the text, for Haggai 3. 5. read i. 4, 5.
175. 15 line from top, read *bigoted*.
16 line from top read *deified* in place of *defied*.

A SERMON

ON THE INCOMPARABLE EXCELLENCY OF RELIGION IN THE LIFE OF MAN.

BY

SAMUEL AUSTIN, D. D.

Pastor of a Congregational Church in Worcester—Massachusetts.

DEUT. xxxii. 47.

'*For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.*'

THESE are among the last words spoken by Moses the great lawgiver of Israel. They are a part of his valadictory address to them, which is throughout solemn and impressive. He had, in the foregoing passages of this address, given a short account of the marvelous interpositions of God in their behalf; mentioned several judgments which had overtaken them for their rebellions; recapitulated the most material laws which had been ordained for them to observe; pressed upon them obedience to those laws, and assured them of reaping a rich harvest of blessings in case they should walk dutifully with God, and of suffering the most dreadful effects of his displeasure if they should refuse to do so. In the verse before the text he brings his exhortation to a serious close..... 'And he said unto them, set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe, to do all the words of this law.'

A very powerful motive he subjoins in the text..... 'For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.' Let us apply this, my hearers, to ourselves..... Beyond all doubt it will apply to us with as strict propriety, and to as great an extent as it did to the people of Israel. What Moses had enjoined was a strict and punctual observance of all the divine requirements. This is religion. Religion consists in obedience to God. The first great law, which is the rule of obedience to all intelligent creatures, is this. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.' This law is comprehensive of all our duty as it respects our Creator. Love is the essence and the sum of it. He who loves God with all his heart will certainly worship him in the several ways, social and secret, in which he has directed us to approach him. He will reverence him deeply, be afraid of offending him, have the most sacred respect to his authority, teachably receive all his instructions, be cheerfully resigned to the disposals of his providence, unconditionally commit himself into his hands, and endeavour to employ all his faculties, and fill up all his time in serving him.

But this general law of love, as it extends to creatures in *our* circumstances, involves some particular duties. It binds us to repentance, faith, and gratitude for that immensely rich salvation which the gospel sets before us. These duties binding on us as sinners, are most evidently comprehended in the general law, which requires us to acknowledge Jehovah as our God and to love him with all our hearts. If we possess this love to God we shall certainly feel self loathing for all our past undutiful treatment of him. We shall return from our apostacy, and take his part against ourselves. We shall cordially approve of the law which condemns us, and adore the justice which is illustrated in

the execution of that law. We shall embrace with joy an offended Saviour. For in proportion as this love reigns within us, Jesus and his work must be precious in our eyes. We shall bear without murmuring every affliction of life, as infinitely less than we deserve, and as necessary to fill up that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ. Our gratitude for so inestimable a favour as the salvation of which he is the author and finisher, will mingle itself with all our worship, and form the most elevated part of it.

In speaking of obedience to the requirements of God, as the sum of religion, we must not forget the second table of the law. This summarily requires that we love our neighbour as ourselves; i. e. that we regard his existence, improvement, and everlasting happiness, with the same friendly concern which we should feel for our own. This law is also obligatory upon all intelligent creatures. As it respects the condition of man, in a state of moral estrangement from God, it involves peculiar duties. It binds us to withdraw from all participation in the sins of wicked men, as a necessary expedient to bring them to repentance. It binds us to do all that we can, and to intercede in incessant humble prayer for their salvation. It binds us to rejoice in the conversion of those whom God is graciously pleased to bring out of darkness into his marvelous light; to take them to our bosoms as christian brethren, and to seek their edification in holiness as preparatory to the bliss of heaven. It binds us to forbearance, and forgiveness, and to all those condescending offices which benevolence dictates towards those whom we cannot recover to God and duty. This is a general view of religion. To this the text has respect; not to the mere profession or form of it, not to any mere party interest, the frippery of ceremonies, or unhallowed zeal, formed in ignorance and bigotry, which may assume the name of religion. It has ever been the propensity of mankind to pass by the essence of

religion, and to substitute in its stead observances which are the fruit of their own invention. It is pure and undefiled religion, extending its empire over the heart and over the faculties and actions of the man, free from all spurious intermixtures, which we are to have in view. Many people imagine that even this is a vain thing. They consider it as not worth any serious concern. But the Jewish lawgiver, speaking from experience, from the dictates of an enlightened understanding, and which is much more, from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, has told us that it is not a vain thing. He has gone much farther, and asserted that it is even our life. I will now endeavour to illustrate and confirm to you the justness of this assertion. Life is the greatest temporal good enjoyed by man. The termination of it is ordinarily considered as the greatest evil. All worldly possessions take their departure with the extinction of life. The malicious destrustion of it is estimated as the greatest crime, and the taking it away in the execution of law is deemed the highest kind of punishment. The term, life, as used in the text has certainly not a confined respect to things merely temporal. It reaches to all the concerns of man, and must be considered as comprehending whatever is, or ought to be valuable to him here and hereafter. To illustrate the justness of the assertion in its proper and extensive sense, I would observe—

1st. That without religion our natural life, with all its attendant enjoyments, is forfeited; and so forfeited that we have no right to calculate upon its continuance, and that it cannot indeed be continued, but as the result of mere long suffering in God..... All creatures, who hold their existence in a state of favor and happiness, have it continued to them either on the ground of their personal obedience, or by a dispensation of grace. There are but these two ways. No other is possible. The infinitely good God, can-

not but approve the characters, and delight in the persons of all obedient creatures. He will certainly secure their happiness in union with himself so long as they remain obedient. The language of God's government with respect to the obedient, is 'he that doth them, shall live in them.' No evil can befall a creature so long as he remains friendly to his Creator. Sin is a revolt from him. It places the creature in a state of rebellion, and under the curse of the law. For the unalterable language of the law, is 'The soul that sinneth shall die.' Life is forfeited by sin. And when life is forfeited, all its attendant privileges, and enjoyments are forfeited.

The other principle on which creatures may hold a happy existence in union with God, is grace. These are properly two distinct covenants. He who has broken the covenant of mere law, or works, may become interested in a new covenant, called the covenant of grace. Such a covenant God has revealed and proposed to man. It is in the hand of Christ as its mediator or executor, and is sealed by his blood. It constitutes the substance of that revelation with which God has been pleased to enrich us. But the sinner cannot be interested in the new covenant while utterly destitute of religion. The covenant takes effect by the consent of the sinner only. This consent must comprehend repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. He who does not repent remains a rebel. He continues in arms against his lawful sovereign. He spurns every persuasion which invites him to be reconciled, and tramples upon the provisions of grace. He has then no title to his natural life, or to any of its enjoyments, by his personal obedience or by grace. His life is continued on the same principle that the life of a murderer is continued in the proceedings of a civil government, after he has been tried, convicted, and the sentence of death has been pronounced against him. It is continued in

mere forbearance. Were all irreligious people struck dead in a moment, they would only be treated according to their real moral condition. This is exactly the reverse of the state of religious people. They, as much as the irreligious, have broken the law; and personally considered, deserve to have life and all its enjoyments taken from them. But they have repented, and embraced the new covenant. They are subjects of grace, and are interested in the promises of grace. These promises secure to them a protraction of life, so long as shall be for their real benefit, and in connection with it, the continuance of every desirable enjoyment.

2d. Without religion, a person cannot be a subject of any blessing. His organs, and health and activity of body, and his faculties of mind, may be continued unimpaired, but they cannot be continued as blessings. With plenty his cup may overflow, but it cannot be as a blessing. These things are favours in providence which call for gratitude, as they illustrate the excellency of Jehovah's character, are the opposite of what the sinner deserves, and are so many talents which may be put to dutiful use. But they do not indicate an interest in the blessing, any more than if the recipient were all the while suffering the miseries of the damned. A malefactor under sentence of death, may have his execution respited, but the reprieve will not indicate that the government means to treat him at all as an object of its smiles. He may be fed, comfortably lodged, and have every want supplied; but none of these things will express any satisfaction in his character. They are consistent with a perfect detestation of it, and a resolution not to mitigate upon the whole, in the least, the severity of his punishment.

Those receive gifts from God as real blessings, and those only, who are personally *the blessed*. All blessings descend upon men by the new covenant.

The curse only comes by the old. They only are the blessed who embrace the covenant in which the blessings are deposited. Abraham embraced this covenant. God of course was Abraham's covenant God. Hence God said to him, 'In blessing, I will bless thee.' God was the covenant God of Abraham's seed. They in succession are actual recipients of the covenant. Hence they are said to be the seed which the Lord hath blessed.' Converts from the Gentile world, are Abraham's seed by adoption. They are brought into the same covenant, and become equally with Abraham himself, objects of the blessing. For says Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, 'if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.' It is on this principle that the detail of blessings was given by Moses to the people of Israel, as recorded in the 28th ch. Deut. "And it shall come to pass if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed thou shalt be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall command his blessings upon thee in thy store houses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto, and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." In similar language the Psalmist declares, 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the

seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, that bringeth forth fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.' The Prophet inculcates the same sentiment. 'Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.' This evidence may be sufficient to conclude that the blessing is appropriate to those who are subjects of religion. But I cannot suppress the emphatic benedictions pronounced by our Saviour, in the beginning of his sermon on the mount. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.' The Christian is here designated in the governing affections of his heart, and the leading traits of his character. On him therefore, the blessing rests, and on him only. The unbelieving sinner does not receive it, says the Psalmist. 'But the ungodly are not so, but are as the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.' The favors which the wicked receive do not come in a covenant channel. They testify to no union between God and them. They are not pledges of fatherly love, as those are which are conferred upon the pious. They present no evidence that God designs their good. They may be merely a savour of death unto death. They may contribute only to hasten and augment their final destruction. For 'when the wicked spring as the grass,

and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever.' Which leads me to observe,

3d That he who is destitute of religion is subjected to the positive curse of God's law. This curse rests upon him at all times, and however employed, and it attaches to all he does, possesses, and enjoys. The curse is the reverse of the blessing. It is the portion of the sinner's cup. It expresses the abhorrence God entertains of his character. Being under the law, he is necessarily under the curse. 'Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.' In the chapter in Deut. where the blessing has been quoted we find the curse following the rebellious, and never leaving them till they are finally destroyed. 'But it shall come to pass, if thou shalt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day, that all the curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee, cursed shalt thou be in the city and cursed shalt thou be in the field, cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee Cursing, vexation and rebuke, in all that thou puttest thine hand unto for to do, until thou perish quickly.' 'cursed' says the prophet 'is the man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.' The New Testament speaks in language equally strong to this purpose; nay much more alarming. He who believeth not is declared to be condemned already. The wrath of God is said to abide on him. Expressions of terror are multiplied, as if it were difficult to find words sufficiently

significant to convey a just idea of the weight of that curse which rests upon the irreligious. 'Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil, upon the Jew first and also upon the Gentile.' Thus the curse goes side by side with the blessing. As sure as the latter rests upon the religious; the former rests upon those of an opposite character. It fastens upon them immoveably. It is a burden which, when eternity pours its light upon their minds, they will not be able to bear. It will sink them to the depths of wretchedness. To have the wrath of the immutable Jehovah abide upon a defenceless creature, for a million of years would be dreadful. Who could support the thought of only having his finger held in the flame of a candle for so long a period? What a doom, deeply to be deprecated, to be condemned with Dives, even for this period, to sigh out the mournful complaint, 'I am tormented in this flame.' But the everlasting continuance of this distress is the thing which adds a thousand fold to the horrors of it. From this curse religion delivers us. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.' Invaluable possession! Indeed it is our life.

4th. Religion is our life as it is the only thing which can make us morally and spiritually what we ought to be. There is a death, my brethren which is spiritual, as well as a death which is natural and eternal; I mean the soul's bereavement of the moral image of God, its destitution of that love which his law requires, and its voluntary bondage to sin and satan. To be carnally minded, the apostle tells us, is death. You hath he quickened, again he observes, who were dead in trespasses and sins. He who lives in pleasure, is said to be dead while he liveth. The moral recovery of the soul to God is denominated, on the other hand, life. 'To be spiritually minded is life and peace.' A res-

toration to such a life is what is intended by the term, quickened. This language of scripture proves to us that without religion the soul of man is wholly dead in sin. It has no shade of likeness to the moral excellency of the Deity remaining. It is not only without moral beauty, but is degraded down to a positive resemblance of the arch-adversary of God. View a creature entirely divested of all conformity to the two great commandments which require love to God and our neighbour; at enmity with an infinite being whose nature is love, refusing to be reconciled to him; trampling on his authority; turning a deaf ear to his counsels, going forward with an unconquerable obstinacy in sinning against him; spurning his grace; combined with other enemies of God against his throne and glory; resisting the efforts of the pious, and strengthening the hands of those who hate them, and you certainly have in your minds a creature dead to all moral right. Deep stupidity and moral blindness are the ordinary concomitants of this spiritual death. The heart being totally vitiated, so vitiated as to love darkness rather than light, there is a proneness in man to error and deception. There is an indisposition even to attend with any teachableness to the things which belong to his everlasting peace. 'O,' said the Saviour when he wept over Jerusalem, 'that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.' And the prophet Jeremiah asks, 'to whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, that they cannot harken. The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach, they have no delight in it.' If possible the picture which Paul draws, of the blindness of sinners, is still more frightful. 'This I say therefore and testify, that ye walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated

from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling have given themselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness.' Religion is the resurrection of the creature from this death in sin. It is the putting off of this body of ignorance and deformity, and putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' From the nature of religion, as it has been generally described in the forepart of this discourse, it must appear to be the proper restoration of the sinner, to all moral rectitude. This constitutes real, moral excellence. It harmonizes the creature with the Creator, and disposes him to be active in his service. It rescues him from self imposition, blindness and error. He presents his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God..... Under the influence of it, as the great spring of real improvement, he employs his intellectual powers in diligent and successful search after truth. His eye being single, his whole body is full of light. His exertions are directed to the best things.

Many have been the endeavors of mankind to form excellence and usefulness of character without religion. Great has been the labor to make man a virtuous and amiable being, on some other principle. External purifications have been resorted to. Acts of corporeal worship have been multiplied. Men have gone on pilgrimages, and sunk into cloisters. A heartless morality, shaped according to the superficial opinions of the world, has been cherished, as though it attached real moral worth to man. The principle of honor has been embraced. And the rebel against Jehovah, has approached to single combat in defence of his character, as though he had some worth of character which he might lose. These are miserable expedients to shift off religion, and confirm that darkness of mind in which unconverted men love to be bewildered. It is labor wholly in vain.

Religion is the only thing which can constitute true worth of character, and give man a rank among morally living creatures.

5th. Religion is our life, as it brings with it inestimably precious personal comforts through the changes of this mortal state; secures a peaceful departure out of the world, and gives at last an abundant entrance into the mansions of the blessed. Religion disingages from those exertions which perpetually harrass worldly men. It calms down the anxieties of the mind, dissipates its fears, and reconciles it to adversity..... It leads the possessor of it to a sweet reliance upon an all sufficient Saviour. It gladdens the soul with that aspiring hope which fastens upon the skies; which is its anchor, sure and steadfast, entering to that within the vail. It is its glory so to belittle the world as to detect its cheats, and despise its unholy acquisitions of honor, profit and pleasure. It is its glory to put the malice of earth and hell at defiance, and to vanquish the king of terrors. It is crowned with a part in the first resurrection, and brings its most happy, its highly honoured subject up to the blisful seats of paradise. And O, the unutterable triumphs, the unsatiating, ever expanding raptures it will then enkindle! Go, follow the irreligious man down to his dark and dreary prison below, witness his agonies, hear his moans, think of his being continued this spectacle of shame and misery through interminable ages; and then follow the religious man up to the pearly gates of heaven. See them thrown wide open for his honorable admittance. Behold congratulating angels and saints welcoming him to a participation in their joys. Witness the transports of his soul when his eye is fastened upon his adored Saviour. Mark with what ecstacy he mingles his song of victory with the acclamations of all the ransomed, and let this felicity be drawn out in your imaginations to an endless eternity, and you will have some idea, but,

O, how inadequate, of the extent to which it is true, that religion is our life. Upon the whole it is impossible to name one real personal good, one attainment or enjoyment of real value, which is not religion, itself, or founded in it. Without it the richer a man is in worldly possessions, the poorer he certainly is upon the whole. The more honorable he is in worldly distinctions, the more dishonor attaches to him upon the whole. The more unholy pleasure he enjoys, the more bitterness is he certainly laying up for himself in the latter end. The more he is flattered here, the more will his torments be increased by the revilings of his companions in hell at last. If possible it would be better to be a child of penury in the very lowest grade of human existence, and infinitely better to be a beast, driven by goads, and bearing a yoke, than be a man, even a man of eminence and figure, without religion. But I am constrained to observe once more,

6th. That religion is our life in *social* respects. What an unamiable and unpleasant, not to say wretched society, is an irreligious family? The term wretched, in the strict sense of it, applies to millions of families, for the mere want of religion. A perpetual infraction of each others rights, jealousies, criminations and jars, make up the materials of their history. If there areany enjoyments resulting from family affinities without religion, they rise no higher in their nature, than those of all nimals who live in clusters; and they are counterbalanced by severe sorrows under adversities and bereavements, of which they are the spring. Religion gives to demestic society, all its real value, its innocence, its mutual confidence, its cheerfulness, its unity of interest, its harmony of sentiment, and its aspiring hopes. The endearments indulged, neither satiate nor embitter on reflection. Enlivening conversation on the best subjects, presents a minature of heaven. Trust in God, dispels anxiety and gloom. Anticipations of a happy meeting in hea-

ven, remove the dreariness of that dessolution of their family state, which they know is hastening on. Praise ascends from the family altar, and the voice of an approving God supports and gladdens in the parting scene.

It is religion only, which is the basis of Christian communion, and the life of that most desirable society, called the Church. Here how friendly, how inviting it is! How tender are its sympathies, how abundant are its labors for the general edification, how free are its charities, how brotherly its spirit, how harmonious its songs, and how elevated its joys! Here none are strangers, none are partizans. All are brethren. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the free and the bond are on a level. All are members of the same body. And though they have never seen each other, and live under different political governments, in a state of open war, they feel the uniting attractive influence of one common affection. If it were left to them, there would be no war, no rapine, no oppression one of another. They can be in the most perfect amity with each other, while the world is rent with national hatreds. This is a fact at the present moment. When the nations of Europe are sending out their armies and fleets, and exhausting their resources for each others destruction, while lands are covered, and oceans are stained with human gore, the remnant of the followers of Jesus dispersed over the respective countries, are pouring their affectionate condolance into each others bosoms, drawing tighter the cords of their mutual charities, contributing to each others relief, meeting before the same throne of grace, and combining their efforts to heal the moral disorders of mankind, and spread the gospel over the world. Ye amiable people! Ye are entitled to be called the elect of God. Ye are as a city set on an hill, which cannot be hid. Ye seem feeble and forgotten. And many of you are perse-

cuted. But ye are brethren, and yours finally is the victory, and the glory. When my hearers, religion has accomplished its end, into what a transcendantly glorious society will it form the Christian Church?

It would be doing religon an infinite injury to suppose, that it is the prineiple on which political society is founded. A political society is a collection of men nationally separated from the rest of the world. Its form of government is not generally *chosen*, but the fruit of accident or imposed. It has respect merely to the interests of the world, and will perish with the world. To say that such a society cannot exist in a state of prosperity, without religion, if by prosperous state be meant national aggrandizement, and opulence, is to assert against all evidence. Yet it may be averred, that religion has the most propitious influence on political society. It makes the good magistrate, and the industrious, quiet subject. It gives to contracts their best security, and to labor its sure reward. As it spreads among the mass of a people, crimes will cease, mutual confidence will be restored, order will prevail, and each one will sit under his vine and fig tree, having none to make him afraid.

As a farther evidence of the excellence of religion, I must be permitted to remark, that nearly all those establishments which have charity for their object, seminaries of learning, hospitals of every description, societies for the relief of persons in distress, for the recovery of those who have become the victims of seduction, and for the emancipation of slaves, have sprung from religion as their creative principle.

Thus religion, heaven descended, the image of the Creator, and the sure guide to that happiness, which is to be enjoyed in his love, scatters her bounties, spreads her lights, and extends her healing influence in every direction. It is just the opposite of being a vain thing. It is the only object entitled to our care. To be religious, is to be wise, and right,

useful, and happy. To be without religion, is to be desperately wicked. It is to be a cumberer of the ground, and an heir of hell.

Shall we not then, my hearers, be grieved to the heart for all our past irreligiousness? Shall we not lament our opposition to religion, and neglect of it? Shall we not yield to its demands, come home to God, and be his forever? Can we still go so directly in the face of evidence, law, authority, and experience, as to refuse to be religious? Are we determined never to be what we ought to be? Are we resolved to bring shame, dishonor, and perdition upon ourselves as fast as possible? Can we continue deliberately to prefer a portion with the wicked? If exhortations could do any thing, they should be multiplied till evening; till I sunk down lifeless in the pulpit. And it would be a most desirable death. But if you yield dutifully, it must be to evidence. Evidence is full before you. And with you I leave it, and with him, who shall judge the quick and the dead....Amen.

A SERMON

GOD GLORIFIED IN BUILDING UP ZION.

BY

SAMUEL AUSTIN, D. D.

Pastor of a Congregational Church in Worcester—Massachusetts.

PSALMS cii. 16.

'*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*'

BY Zion in this passage, and as the term is generally used in the Scriptures, we are to understand that holy community commonly styled the Church. There have always been some individuals of this community living in the world, through every successive period of time. Before Christ, it was confined very much to the natural posterity of Abraham. Since his advent, its boundaries have been widely extended, and it has taken into its bosom multitudes of us sinful and miserable Gentiles. Every person who is sanctified in heart is a subject of this community. And every person who gives evidence that he is sanctified, is visibly a subject of it. God is the builder of Zion. He designed it in his infinite mind from eternity; and he efficiently brings into it, all the multitude of which it consists. He forms them to that temper by which they voluntarily sink into a spiritual and holy society. He preserves them under the government of this temper, so that they never can be dismembered from it. Says the Psalmist. Ps. 149. 2. 'Let Israel rejoice in him that *made* him: let the children of Zi-

on be joyful in their king.' In the 43d chapter of Isaiah God speaks of Zion as exclusively his work.—'But now thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.——Fear not; for I am with thee, I will bring thy seed form the east, and will gather them from the west. I will say to the north, give up; and to the south, keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name, for I have created him for my glory. I have formed him, yea I have made him.'

If a superb edifice is rising under the agency of an ingenious architect, his ingenuity as an artist will appear more and more admirable, as the work advances under his hands. As Zion is styled the fullness of him who filleth all in all, and an habitation of God through the spirit, it is to be expected that in its rise, his glory will be greatly illustrated. That it will, is the express assertion of the Psalmist, in the passage I have read to you. With his prophetic eye spread over this immense spiritual building, as it was to rise through the lapse of ages, he asserts that whenever God should act in carrying it forward, he would appear in his glory. This is a sentiment justly entitled to our serious consideration, and must be capable of yielding us much instruction, and comfort. I shall lead you to consider,

1st. When God, according to the import of this passage, may be said to build up Zion.

2d. In what respects, when he does so, he appears in his glory. And

3d. I will suggest to you the proper reflections which flow from such a view of the subject.

1st. We will attend to the inquiry, when God, according to the import of the passage, may be said to build up Zion.

The material world with all its furniture, is temporary. 'They shall perish, but thou remainest, and

they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.' In a perfect system, contrived by an infinitely wise God, that which is temporary and transient, cannot be created for its own sake. It must be subordinate to an interest which is to remain. Zion, as it is a spiritual, redeemed, ever-during society, is an eternal excellency, and the perfection of beauty. All other things in this world, are of inferior consideration, and have utility and beauty, only as they are subordinate to it. We are not to suppose then, that in every thing he does, God is directly building up Zion. In some of his works he does but create and arrange the means. He acts then, with respect to his ultimate work, but indirectly and remotely. The prudent architect, first forms his plan, procures his tools, provides his materials, lays out the scite of his building, and collects his laborers. All this is but preparatory, and subordinate. Afterwards the building actually rises under his hand. In like manner some of the works of God, are but provisional to the proper work of building up Zion. Such is the work of creation. When the sun, and moon, and planets, this globe, with all the variegated beauty which is spread over it; light and life, irrational creatures, and man the noblest of all, rose into being at the commanding voice of God, his power, and wisdom, and goodness shone with admirable splendor. But as yet Zion had not began to exist.

Such is the work of providence. The hand of God preserves and manages every particle of matter, and every portion of sensitive life. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice, and the hairs of our heads are all numbered. But effects which take place in common providence, constitute no part of Zion. The agency which produces them, is therefore but subordinate.

Such are those acts of God, by which knowledge is addressed to the understandings of unrenewed men. Instruction in its nature, however abundant, is but provisional. It may coexist with perfect enmity to God. It may fail, and in innumerable instances does in fact fail of having any saving effect, through the opposition and unteachableness of those to whom it is addressed. We can suppose this world full of instruction, respecting God, his glory, government, the obligations and relations which subsist between him and his creatures, and between one creature and another, and yet Zion have no existence.

Even the appearance of the Son of God in our world, his union to our nature, his sufferings, resurrection, and ascension to glory, and the subjection of the myriads of angels to his mediatorial dominion, are but preparatory and provisional. For all this might be supposed to be done, and yet Zion not be.

Those extraordinary operations of omnipotent agency, by which sinners are awakened, brought under deep convictions, and filled with alarming apprehensions of God's wrath, do not properly form any part of that peculiar system of operation, by which Zion is built up. For let the light which is spread over the mind, be ever so great; let the sinner under the alarms of conscience approach ever so near to complete despair, remaining a sinner he is still of the world, and is under the curse of the law he has broken. He has not yet yielded the controversy. He has not entered the gates of Zion, nor partaken in the least degree of the peculiar character of its citizens. We might suppose the agency of God spreading such conviction, and such despondency over every mind, while as yet Zion had no existence.

As zion is a spiritual society, consisting of persons who are taken out of the world, renewed and sanctified, formed in heart and life to a likeness to the saviour, it is then built up when sinners are brought

to repentance, are preserved and carried forward in a holy life, and are finally translated to heaven.—When a sinner becomes a sincere penitent, and not till then, he ceases to be an enemy of God. Old things are now done away, and all things are become new. He changes his ground, his objects of ultimate love, his associations, and the direction of his efforts. He quits the service of satan, and cleaves with full purpose of heart to the Lord Jesus. He becomes a living stone, fit to constitute a part of the immense temple of grace. He is disposed to take, and does actually take that place which is assigned him by the great builder. He is disposed to keep that place, and to strengthen the work instrumentally, by the application and dilligent use of all his talents.

Persons may be brought to repentance solitarily, i. e. when there is no revival of religion in the place where they live. And they may be converted in connection with others, more or less, under uncommon refreshings from the presence of the Lord. In both these ways, God has in every age carried forward this spiritual building. The spirit has been always operating in one place or another, as the wind has always been blowing; sometimes like a gentle breeze hardly perceptible, at others like a rushing tempest. More generally it appears to have been God's method to affect the recovery of sinners by occasional effusions of his Holy Spirit, by which multitudes have been collectively brought into his kingdom. Many such seasons of extensive ingathering there have undoubtedly been, which have not come to our knowledge. Sacred history has transmitted incidental notices of several extensive revivals which took place among the people of Israel, in the times which preceded the advent of the Saviour. The effusions of the spirit were much more abundant after his ascension. Three thousand were converted in one day, under a single sermon. Five thousand in another day. During the first century Zion enlarged her

boundaries to a great extent, and received millions into her bosom. Heathen idolators by shoals were caught in the gospel net. Every where the preaching of the gospel was with power, being accompanied with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. Ecclesiastical history records vast ingatherings in later periods, under a similar supernatural influence, in Germany, Switzerland, France, Holland, England, Scotland, Ireland, and our own country. About sixty years ago, there was a very remarkable revival of religion over New-England, and in the middle colonies. Great numbers were brought under deep convictions, and as there is great reason to believe, to sincere repentance. Within ten years past many districts of our country have been signally enriched with this heavenly blessing. And we have liberty to rely, that almighty agency will be continually employed in subduing sinners to the cross, till Zion is completed, and raised to her ultimate elevation in the mansions of eternal bliss. For it is promised, (vain expectation is that which is built upon the supposed nullity and inefficiency of this promise.) 'I will work, and who shall let it. I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. O thou afflicted, and tossed, and not comforted: Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundation with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day, or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. One shall not say unto another, know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least even unto the greatest. And the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.' These and many other scipture promises respecting the future rise and vast extension of Zion, have certainly not yet had

their accomplishment. As they shall be fulfilled, striking evidence will be furnished that God is the builder of Zion, and it will be inquired, with deep admiration and praise, What hath God wrought?

I am to lead you to consider in what respects God, when he acts in building up Zion, appears in his glory. The declaration of the text implies, that God has originally and independently a fullness of glory, which has its clearest illustration as Zion advances under his all disposing hand. It is our business now to attend to the particulars in which this illustration is made.

1st. When God builds up Zion he appears in the infinity and irresistibility of his power. By power we understand that ability which an intellegnnt agent has to bring to pass such effects as he wishes to accomplish. Power may be unequal in different intelligent agents. The power of one may be competent to the production of certain effects, but not to the production of others, to which the power of another may be adequate. Power in itself is a valuable attribute because it may be employed kindly, in effecting desirable ends, which could not be effected without it. Good dispositions are ineffectual, if attended with perfect weakness. Perfect benevolence will labor to diffuse its blessings in vain, if overruled by a superior will. God is good. He is unlimitedly benevolent, without any opposite bias of heart. Those creatures who are opposite to him are evil. Malevolence constitutes the principle of their opposition. It is infinitely desirable that they should not be able to impede in the least, the execution of God's purposes. It is infinitely desirable that he should possess, and appear cloathed with, supreme power; power adequate to all the ends of his administration. In the possession of such power, he is fitted to be the sole governor of the world, the manager of all events, the guardian of the moral system, the successful promoter of happiness,

the refuge of the weak and needy, and is a meet object of universal unreserved confidence. Clothed with omnipotence, he must be beyond the possibility of disappointment. He can effectually prevent ill-disposed creatures from doing mischief; and can make them, against their inclinations subservient to good. The infinite goodness of God is a full security that his power will be always employed for ends purely benevolent. Without it, he could bring nothing to pass. With it, he can do all his pleasure.—Power then is an essential portion of his glory. It goes to constitute that infinite excellency of nature, on the ground of which, he is entitled to be loved with all the heart and soul and strength and mind. The more his power is displayed, the more clearly must all intelligent creatures perceive their obligation to love him in this perfect manner. In this light the power of God was certainly presented to the mind of the apostle, when he said, Rom. ix. 22. 'What if God, willing to shew his wrath and make his power known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.' Thus it must be contemplated by the inhabitants of heaven, when they sing, 'We give thee thanks, O Lord God, Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy *great power*, and hast reigned.'

The power of God is displayed in the works of creation, providence, and general government. It is displayed in perpetuating, in a state of holy happiness, the myriads of obedient creatures; and in the complete reduction of all his enemies. But it has a more clear and admirable display in that agency by which Zion is erected.

It is the power, the irresistible power, of God exclusively which reconciles the sinner, disposes him to submit, keeps him in a course of holy obedience, makes him valient for the truth, strengthens him in the day of trial, and translates him to glory. These

things are not to be ascribed to any previous teachableness, good disposition, striving, or prayers, in the sinner himself; nor to any strivings, or prayers of others, to the efficacy of means, or the force of persuasion. The previous dispositions and endeavors of the sinner entirely resist this work of God. The character of every sinner in this respect, is given in the first chap. of Proverbs. 'Because I have called and ye have *refused*, I have stretched out my hand and *no man regarded;* but *ye have set at naught all my councils, and would none of my reproofs.*' Many of those who are subjects of this renewing influence are, before their conversion, notorious examples of stout heartedness, of profligacy, and unbelief; prone to vilify all serious and experimental religion, to turn the preaching of the gospel into banter and to use all their exertions to defeat its influence. They manifest more hatred to religion than to any other object. What a display of power to bring into cordial and affectionate subjection, creatures so inveterately hostile: to turn them entirely about, and lead them to pray, and labor, and suffer for a cause to which they were so opposed! Here is omnipotence in its most honorable attitude. 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' How gloriously does omnipotence triumph, even when an individual is made a subject of such a change! How much more when multitudes, large proportions of towns and districts unitedly present their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable! Behold a congregation, over which stupidity and unbelief hold their iron reign, opposing, perhaps with open contempt, the distinguishing truths of the gospel, now impressed, deeply solemn, dismissing their opposition, and kneeling tearfully at the foot of the cross. It is to be remembered that the whole body of unbelieving sinners are combined in counteracting this work of God. For, says our Saviour, 'he who is not for me

is against me, and he who gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.' All the legions of hell too are leagued in the opposition. As Zion progresses in gaining converts, and is carried forward by the hand of God to her destined glory, all this opposition of earth and hell are entirely disconcerted and defeated. The enemies of the cross consume away in their sins, and as impotent foes, wasting their strength for naught, and perish without hope. Greatly is the power of God glorified then, when he builds up Zion.

2d. When God builds up Zion, he appears in the glory of his wisdom. God is wise in counsel as he is excellent in working. Wisdom, an attribute essential to all respectability of character, and necessary to the performance of all works of utility, goes to constitute the supreme excellence of Jehovah's name. With perfect unerring wisdom he is clothed. He is the only wise God. 'O the depths,' says the Apostle, 'of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!' Whenever we turn our eyes on the face of nature, whatever object we examine, great or small, we are astonished at the wisdom which has contrived and disposed of what we see. Every leaf, and flower and tree, every organized living body, every mind brings home to us the impression that God, is infinite in wisdom. But in the work of redemption the wisdom of God shines with unparalleled brightness. Christ is emphatically the wisdom of God as well as the power of God. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Speaking of the design and issue of the work of redemption, Paul says Eph. iii. 9, 10. 'And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the

church the manifold wisdom of God.' If wisdom consists, as none will deny that it does, in adopting and steadily pursuing the most excellent end, and calling into use infallible means for the attainment of it, causing good to spring out of evil, order out of disorder, light out of darkness, happiness out of misery, and in defeating the schems of crafty and malignant creatures, then the wisdom of God is signally glorified in the whole series of operation, by which the church is advanced. What end can be imagined better than that of the greatest happiness of the moral system! And how exactly and most desirable do all the operations of redeeming love issue in this end? With what loveliness of character and peace of mind are those enriched who are born of God! But the joys they feel here, are the earnest only of the everlasting inheritance. How much greater beauty and glory are shed round the moral system than if there had been no apostacy, no suffering Saviour, no redemption! How are the schemes of satan entirely defeated! How completely are the machinations of the insolent enemies of God upon earth frustrated! God's purpose stands. His word prospers unto the thing whereunto it is sent. The wrath of man praises him. Opposition wastes away under the successful triumphs of the remnant which he hath chosen. All heaven is gladdened. And its anthems of praise wax louder and louder, as one stone after another is added to this great building.

3d. When God builds up Zion he appears in the glory of his grace. Perfect goodness constitutes the moral character of God. In this all moral excellence is to be resolved. When Moses prayed 'I beseech thee shew me thy glory,' he was favourably answered in the promise, 'I will make all my goodness to pass before thee.' But can this goodness become grace! Can it open its treasures to the evil and unthankful! Can it go into measures infinitely expen-

sive to redeem them from a punishment strictly deserved? Can it come over mountains of sins, reconcile, embosom, and elevate to the height of glory, and blessedness obdurate rebels? Can it come down so low as to dwell, by a most endearing inhabitation, with those who have foolishly and perversely destroyed themselves? Such is the attitude in which the goodness of God presents itself upon the Gospel scheme. Zion in its whole structure is a building of grace. The salvation of sinners must be wholly of grace. They do nothing to procure; they do not even previously desire the infinite blessing. Such throughout is the testimony of the scripture on the subject. 'By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' The sinner deserves for his abusive treatment of his Maker what his law threatens, eternal death. But the dispensation of which he is actually the subject is just the opposite. He is raised from a death in trespasses and sins. He is brought home to God. His countless iniquities are freely forgiven. He is adopted into the heavenly family. He is made an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ to an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. He is admitted to the honor of suffering in the cause of virtue and of being a co-worker with God. Instead of being damned, he is treated far more favourably than if he never had transgressed; and all this on the ground of the voluntary interposition of the Son of God, as a propitiation. Does not God then appear eminently in the glory of his grace, in the whole of that extended operation by which the church is saved?

4th. When God builds up Zion, he appears in the glory of absolute sovereignty. At absolute sovereignty we have always reason to tremble when in the hands of an ill-disposed being. A cruel sovereignty is the most cruel of all imaginable things. But a benevolent and gracious sovereignty is most

desirable. Such is the sovereignty of God. This sovereignty is clearly displayed in the whole of that agency which redeems the church. It is displayed in selecting the materials, bringing them into the building, keeping them there, and perfecting the structure. 'He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion. It is not of him who willeth, nor of him who runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy. Of him, and to him, and through him, are all things.' Jesus thought this sovereignty of God, as illustrated in the salvation of sinners, worthy of grateful and exulting acknowledgment. Luke x. 21. 'At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes: even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' How desirable to a rectified mind that the glorious Jehovah should always appear an absolute sovereign! And how is it possible that he should exercise grace at all, but in a sovereign way? Whether he save a part or the whole of our fallen race, more or fewer, this person or that, must depend entirely on his determination. What reason can be assigned that he chose Abraham to be his friend and left others of the posterity of Noah unchosen? Why did he make his family, in their successive generations the depositories of his truth and grace, in distinction from other families of the earth? Why was Paul a chosen vessel, and influenced to build up the faith which he previously destroyed; when many of the same Pharisaic school remained enemies to the cross and died in their sins? Why has God taken such individuals as he has in following periods, and made them living stones in this great building of his grace? Why is the Holy Spirit poured out upon one place and not upon another? Why at one time and not at another? Why is one person taken and another left? To all

these questions there is but one reply. It is in the words of our Saviour, just quoted. 'Even so Father; for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.'

We are naturally at variance with this glorious sovereignty of God, We want to save ourselves, if we are saved at all. We cannot bear to be mere debtors to distinguishing grace. But let us feel as we will, whether we approve or disapprove, God appears glorious in his sovereignty in every part of his work of redemption.

5th. When God builds up Zion, he appears in the glory of his immutability. How imperfect would God be if he were mutable, if he shifted his plans as men do; perpetually relinquishing the resolutions which he had formed, and adopting new ones? Were this the case, there woud be no system in his operations. There would be no determinate end pursued by fixed and infallible means. He could not be an object of confidence. Universal distrust would be reasonable; and his government, if he could be supposed to govern at all, would be a source of anxiety, not of happiness. It is a matter of the greatest consolation, that God being powerful and good, is unchangeable. I am not now to prove to you, that immutability is one of his attributes. He who admits a God, must admit his immutability. Change supposes derivation, and dependance. Hence the scriptures are very careful to ascribe to him this character. They tell us that he changeth not; that he is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, without the least variableness or shadow of turning. When God builds up Zion, this adorable excellency of his nature has a most honorable illustration. We see one purpose revealed, and that purpose steadily pursued through the lapse of ages. The building of grace rises continually through thousands of years, on the same plan, of the same materials, and in the same way. Nothing from without operates in any degree to vary this plan.

If God could be induced to alter his purpose, he certainly would be pursuaded to do so, by the ungrateful treatment which his overflowing grace meets with in this wicked world. The contempt which falls upon his work, or the perverseness of those who are made the subjects of it, would induce him either to lay it entirely aside, or to suspend it. But as the Holy Jesus went steadily and immoveably forward, through a host of opposers, and under circumstances inexpressibly trying to his virtue, in accomplishing the errand for which he came into the world; so God in the face of all opposition, and infinite dissuasives in the perverseness of his creatures, invariably pursues his designs of grace, and at every step of his work presents himself to the view of his creatures in the grandeur and glory of absolute immutability.

6th. In the building up of Zion, God appears in the glory of his faithfulness. Faithfulness and veracity are nearly allied. The former, however, has more especial respect to antecedent promises. The covenant promises which God has condescended to make respecting the ingathering of the elect, and the building up of Zion, are numerous. Some of them have been quoted. They run through the scriptures. The fulfilment of them, is essential to the glory of divine faithfulness. At present it may be supposed a question, whether God will execute his engagements. His character in this respect, may be understood to be on trial. The almost entire aspect of the world, at least at certain periods, looks the other way. Appearances are, as if the word of God would not take effect. The wicked venture mockingly to say, 'Where is the promise of his coming?' They ask, 'where is your God?' They insult our hopes, and would persuade us to give up religion as a dream. The feeble faith of the believer is sometimes staggered. With a faultering mind he says to his fellow disciple, with the dismayed

Christians of old, 'I verily thought that this had been he who would have redeemed Israel.' This great question, whether the declarations of God in behalf of Zion, be to be depended on, has in the building up of Zion a clear affirmative answer. The building goes on. The word stands confirmed. Unbelief is confounded. The covenant is completely executed. And God is proclaimed to the joy of all benevolent creatures, the faithful God.

Lastly. When God builds up Zion, he appears in the glory of successful superiority to all his enemies. In respect to Zion, God and wicked creatures are engaged in a very interesting struggle. God says it shall rise, the wicked say it shall fall. He builds; they endeavor to demolish. He orders his gospel to be preached; they attempt to silence it. He calls in, the subjects of grace, they attempt to hinder their conversion, or to decoy them back when converted. They seem to succeed. They become strong in their own imaginations and wax confident in their opposition. They anticipate a complete triumph over the people and cause of God. But when God works, who can let it? When he builds up Zion, it rises without difficulty. The strength of its enemies is found to be perfect weakness. They are beneath. He is above.

Let us now see,

3d. What reflections naturally follow from this subject.

1. It is an obvious inference from what has been said, that those who are opposed to real religion are in heart, and in all their actions the enemies of God. When real religion gains ground, Zion is built up. Real religion gains ground, when careless sinners are awakened, convinced of their total sinfulness, are renewed in heart, joined to the Lord, and led on in connection with their companions in piety, in the narrow way of holiness. It gains ground eminently, when such instances of conviction and conversion are numerous, under signal effusions of the Holy Ghost,

upon a congregation, a district, or country. Religion makes no progress in any other way. Civil order and decorum of manners, are altogether short of it. But to such a progress of religion, many are opposed. Spreading conviction and earnest inquires about the salvation of the soul, are a great trouble to them. The tears of the penitent are unsightly in their eyes. Prayer and zeal and exemplary holiness, are offensive to them. They would gladly see the subjects of religion, revolt back again to their former levity and worldliness. Let all such opposers of true religion, consider how their opposition proves the truth of the testimony of scripture, that the carnal heart is enmity against God. Resisting such a progress of religion, they resist the special operations of the Holy Ghost. They are hostile to that work of God which is of supreme value in his account, and to his appearing in his glory. What greater proof of perfect enmity to God can be given? Is not this the same temper of mind precisely, with that which put the Saviour of the world to death; and in the same circumstances, would it not act in the same manner?

2d. If God be the builder of Zion, and it was his purpose from eternity eminently to display his glory in building it up, then christians should never indulge the least despondency with respect to its invaluable interests. When opposition to truth and vital religion is widely extended and apparently successful; when singular efforts to resist the torrents of corruption, and enlarge the boundaries of the redeemer's kingdom, seems to prove abortive, christians are too apt to yield themselves up to dejection and distrust. But how unreasonble? How feeble that faith must be, which doubts, so easily? How is evidence lost sight of, and how little honored is the divine tesmony? It were more reasonable to apprehend that the earth will be immediately dissolved, and that all worlds will expire, than that Zion will ever be left

in any circumstance of real hazard. Does God preside with his watchful providence over the seasons, day and night, over the minutest parts of nature, and over events, the most trivial; and can he fail of accomplishing his greatest work, in which his heart is ultimately engaged, and to which all his other works, even the incarnation and sufferings of the WORD, are but subordinate?

3d. If all the attributes of God are employed, and most fully illustrated in the building up of Zion, then we may rely that when completed, it will be a most fair, and most glorious building. The philosopher admires the structure of the material system. And full of wonder indeed it is. The structure of minds is still more admirable. But how much more glorious must that work of God be, when completed, which is the fulness of him who filleth all in all! With propriety is it styled by the sacred penman, and undoubtedly to all who have a rectified moral discernment it will appear, 'the perfection of beauty.'

4th. If God have undertaken to build up Zion, and his glory appears in so many, and in such important respects as it rises, then Christians have the greatest inducements to pray much and earnestly, and believingly, for the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and extensive revivals of religion. Christians certainly may pray with importunity and with great expectations, for the progress of that work in which God is eminently glorified. The manifestation of God's glory must be very desirable to them. That his name may be declared and exalted throughout all the earth, must be the fondest wish of their hearts. The supreme good is realized when the spirit is abundantly given, and religion, in the power, and purity of it spreads farther and farther in the world. Let this then be the great subject of the christians daily prayer. Let him here fill his mouth with arguments drawn from the purposes and plans of God, from the provi-

sions of his grace, and the promises of the gospel. Let him wrestle with Jacob, and prevail with Israel.

5th. If God be the builder of Zion, and his glory is eminently illustrated as it rises, then we ought to notice with gratitude and praise all those events that come to our knowledge, which are peculiarly auspicious to the interests of pure christianity. The multiplication of the means of salvation; the self-denial and zeal with which numerous pious youth are devoting themselves to the ministry; the establishment and successful labors of missionary societies; the translation of the scriptures into different languages, and the revivals of religion which are taking place in different parts of our country and world, are events signally in favor of pure christianity. They indicate good to the Zion of our God. Let christians eye his hand in these events, and glorify his name.

Finally, let us all bring home to ourselves the solemn inquiry. Has distinguishing grace taken us out of the world, subdued us to the gospel, and put us as living stones into that glorious building which God is erecting upon earth? Have we been united by a living faith to Christ and his people? Are we built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles?

Happy are they, indeed, who are citizens of this heavenly city. Their place of defence shall be the munition of rocks, bread shall be given them to the full, and their waters shall be sure. The lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. But without are dogs, sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. Here is the Sodom of the world, from which sinners must flee, to the city which God redeems, or perish in their iniquities. Now to him who sitteth between the Cherubim, who is the Jehovah of Israel, be glory and thanksgiving and praise forever.

THE SINNER WARNED.

A SERMON.

BY

CALVIN CHAPIN,

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GENESIS, xix. 17.

—Escape for thy life—

HEARERS, it is written, 'Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, shall be safe.' It is also written, 'But the expectation of the wicked shall be cut off. The hope of unjust men perisheth.'

Lot was a righteous man, and therefore, the Lord snatched him from that destruction, in which his fellow citizens of polluted Sodom and Gomorrah, were for their wickedness, overwhelmed. 'God knoweth how to deliver,' and he will deliver from final evil, 'them that,' in heart, 'are his.' He will never deliver them, however, but by their escaping from a situation which sin renders dangerous. This was the fact with righteous Lot. He must fly from the place destined to ruin, or he must perish in the common perdition. To him, safety was brought by the hands of the same angels, that were ministers of destruction to the wicked. His danger was, nevertheless, great and alarming. The command, pointing to him the way of deliverance was, of course, urgent 'Escape for thy life.'

But is not the danger of every impenitent sinner as great as Lot's was, when the cities, in which he dwelt,

were by a stroke of wrath, to be turned suddenly into an everlasting monument of God's indignation against sin? Yea, sinners, is not your danger, this moment, infinitely greater than his was? The evil which threatened him, and from which, heaven warned him instantly to escape, was *temporal*. It pertained to the concerns of a world, whose 'fashion passeth away.' The evil which threatens you, is *eternal*. And from a situation, which exposes you to eternal evil, you are, by this message of God, admonished immediately to escape.

Hear, therefore, in the text, God's warning to every soul yet uninterested in Christ: 'Escape for thy Life.'

First. The sinners duty is expressed: '*Escape*.'

Secondly. A motive to the performance of duty is urged. '*For thy Life*'

First. The sinners duty is expressed. '*Escape*.' Something must be done. A change of condition must be experienced. The very nature, as well as manner, of the command implies, that the subject of it is interesting and deserves speedy attention.

But, here sinners, you are, perhaps, saying in your hearts; 'Is it not sufficiently well with us, as we are? *Escaping* belongs indeed to those who are in danger. But who is he that shall disturb our peace? With what terrors shall any make us afraid? We perceive no danger. What occasion then, have we of escaping—of seeking a condition different from our present? Shall we not have quietness, *though we walk after the imaginations of our own hearts*—yea, though we pass through life, and die, without concern, on the matters, about which you speak?'

Such feelings and such language are the fruits of a seared conscience. They are the very often observed dictates of a heart that is far from God; of a heart which is hardened by irreligious habits, into a fatal stupidity about the concerns of the soul.

First, then sinners, justly, honestly, survey your situation. View it by the light of your own practice. View it by the light of revelation. Only admit truth, and your fatal self deceivings and thoughtlessness will be scattered. Facts will show you, whether your necessity of escaping, be not most urgent. Your *perceiving* no danger, is far from proving, that there *is* none. In spiritual things, none are so ready to say, 'Lo, we see,' as the spiritually blind. 'Are *we* blind also?' has in every age, been the proud reply of the impious, when self condemning truths were told them. Divine things are 'spiritually discerned.' To the man, who both by nature and confirmed habit, is blind, they are, therefore, foolishness. Considering what your hearts naturally are, your false opinions about your own safety, are not surprising; though they are lamentable, and ought to be alarming.

But be the question again asked: What is the situation from which it is your duty to escape? Not that of entire dependence on God—living, moving, and having your being, in him: Not that of existing always under the direct inspection of his eye: Not that of trial, in this world, for an unchanging eternity to come: Not that of infinite obligation to love, and honor and obey him with all your heart: Not that of the strictest responsibility to him, for every exercise of the soul, and for every deed of the hands and tongue: Not that of certainty, that you shall be, one day, summoned to receive, at his hand, your endless inheritance of pleasure or of pain, according to the right or the wrong use, which you will then be found to have made of the talents that he gave you to occupy for himself: In a word; Not that of the relation you bear to him, as your maker, preserver, benefactor, lawgiver and judge.

It is in itself, altogether desirable to be situated, as you are, in all these respects, with relation to a being infinitely wise, and great and good. Your escape, from this situation, is neither required, nor possible.

But the dangerous situation, in which you are, and which you ought instantly to forsake, is that of *opposition* in your hearts, to the living and true God. The evil is moral. It has in it, exceeding criminality. The charge is, therefore, serious and awful. It is a charge of rebellion against the greatest and best of beings—of transgressing laws perfectly good—of involving yourselves in the guilty forfeiture of every favor, and of bringing upon your souls, by your own choice, the displeasure of him, who is at once omnipotent and unchangeable. Such is the charge. Dare you plead not guilty? Dare you say, 'It is not true,' while you know, that you live irreligiously; while you know, that you love and serve and trust the creature, rather than the creator.

If you deny this charge of opposition, in heart, to God, behold witnesses summoned from your practice; from your own bosom; to prove the truth. What testimony, shewing that your situation, as God beholds you, is dangerous, because criminal, is borne by your exercises of heart towards your neighbor? God requires you to love your neighbor as yourself. And your conscience testifies, that the law is good.

Let then your envy of your neighbour; your jealous feelings, your malicious purposes, your revengeful wishes, speak. Let your covetousness of what is lawfully his; your secret rejoicings at his disappointments and distresses; your vile affections, all speak. These, sinners, are the exercises of your hearts towards your neighbor. Excuse not yourselves, nor attempt your justification, by saying, 'we never allow ourselves to act out these feelings and wishes.' Remember that in God's sight, every exercise of the heart is an action, either good or bad, and that for it as such, you are solemnly answerable. See then, how entirely your feelings and wishes of heart, towards your neighbor condemn you.

But do your hearts treat the living God any better, than they treat your neighbor? He rightly requires you to love him with the whole heart. You now stand charged with the violation of this commandment. An indictment is found. You are arraigned at the bar. Do you deny the charge? Let witnesses again declare. Let the testimony, on which the verdict shall be found, be brought from your feelings, and manner of life towards God.

Let the motives, with which you ever engage in religious service, either open or secret, speak. *They* will declare, that either supposed worldly advantages or a slavish fear, bring you before God in all the forms of religion, which you ever observe. Let the hope of worldly advantages, and a servile fear cease, and God would receive nothing more of your formal respect. Your outward manner of life would then express the same thing which your hearts have always said unto God: 'Depart from us; for we desire not a knowledge of thy ways.'

But the trial is not through. Let your neglect of God's word; or your perversion of its meaning to make it suit the wishes of the irreligious heart, speak. Let your ungodly manner of spending the Lord's sabbaths; time which he has consecrated, and which you know, that he has commanded you to remember and keep holy, speak. Let your ingratitude for his favours; let your murmurings when his wisdom sees it not best to gratify your personal wishes; let your idolatrous attachment to created things, speak. Let your supreme care to 'lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth; to set your affections on things that are beneath; to look, wholly at the things which are seen and temporal,' all speak. Let the offence which your hearts take at the thought of keeping near to God, by habitual prayer and devotion; let the impossibility you find of conceiving how there can be happiness in the life of piety; let your resistance of

God's word and providence and spirit; let your increased hardness of heart against him; your increased aversion to the devout and humble life, amidst the kindest instructions and warnings which it is possible for him to give, or you to receive; let your rejection of his beloved Son, whom in the exercise of boundless love, he has sent into the world for its salvation; yes, let your wishes of heart, that there were no such God; or if there must be such a being, that your dependence upon him, and relation to him may be dissolved forever; let all these exercises of your hearts and these practices of your life, pronounce on your situation.

Their verdict is clear, and instantly made up. Your manner of passing through your probationary life, is that of enemies, not friends to God; that of rebels against him; not of subjects loyal and affectionate to his government. But can such a situation be otherwise than dangerous? Opposed to the being on whom you depend, disgusted with all the holy services which he requires; as far from him, as possible, in all your affections and conduct; continually setting up his rivals in your hearts, and paying them your homage; bestowing upon them your love; must you not be objects of his righteous, but tremendous indignation? Thus your own hearts and practice condemn you. And recollect, 'if your own hearts condemn you, God is greater than your hearts, and knoweth all things,' discerns incalculably more of your wickedness and danger, than you now perceive. All this rebellion is against a Being infinitely good. All these iniquities are violations of infinite obligation. They are transgressions of laws, obedience to which, renders all the obedient blessed. They are a manner of life eternally inconsistent with real happiness.

What then, can be plainer than the danger of your situation as sinners, and the duty of immediately escaping! You have now been called to view your sit-

uation by the light of your own feelings and practice.

But *Secondly*, your situation must be seen by revealed light. What does the Searcher of hearts tell you, that your real situation is? 'Hear O heavens, and give ear, O earth, I have nourished and brought up children and they have *rebelled* against me.' That same rebellion, against the living God, is here charged upon you, which is proved by all your practice.

He himself tells you, that all who reject him, are in his sight wicked. The disobedient are condemned already,' before him.

If you have not, in the habitual exercises of your hearts, a religious regard to God; a religious fear of his displeasure at every manner of life not pious and heavenly; a religious love of him as infinitely pure and holy; a religious affection for all his known commandments; you are, in his sight, *wicked*. And he tells you, that 'he is angry with the *wicked* every day.' Now what can you need more to convince you of tremendous danger in your situation, than to know that God looks down upon you with displeasure? What further proof can be necessary, that *escaping* from your present situation, is your first—your most important duty?

He also assures you, that while you continue unrenewed, in the disposition of your souls, to a supreme love of himself and his service, you are 'treasuring up unto yourselves, wrath against the day of wrath.' No language can more strongly prove the danger of your condition, while unholy. To lay up by an ungodly temper of heart, to lay up as in a treasury, stores of wrath; the wrath too, of him, who is your final and omnipotent Judge, must surely be a most dangerous method of using your talents, your understanding and strength. So long, therefore, as you are doing this, you ought with fear and trembling to remember, that your situation is one, from which every consideration of duty and safety requires you instantly to escape.

You must at once concede, that God is infinitely wise and good. He therefore *deserves* the love of your whole heart; the obedience of your whole strength. In commanding you to render him this, he commands nothing, but that which is perfectly reasonable. Of course you are doing wrong, you are conducting yourselves wickedly in every act of an irreligious life; in every affection of an unholy heart. Your situation then, while you remain ungodly, must be in itself, such as demands your escape, because it is altogether criminal and dangerous.

Thus sinners, your feelings and your practice, and the revelation which the Searcher of all hearts has made, express only *one* sentiment concerning you. They all declare, that in heart you are opposed to the holy character and service of God. They all declare you *gone out of the right way*, and that while you continue thus, 'destruction and misery are in your paths.' They all declare you to be 'children of wrath,' and that you never, excepting by an affectionate turning to the Lord, can find the way of peace and blessedness.

Hear therefore, your duty proclaimed in the text. 'Escape,' fly speedily, from a state of opposition to God. Hate every sin. Detest all that which your Lawgiver and Judge has forbidden. Loath and condemn yourselves, because you have rebelled against Him. Embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only way of your pardon and acceptance. 'Walk henceforth in newness of life. Renounce the hidden things of darkness, and live as children of the light. Deny ungodliness,' and every forbidden affection. 'Let the grace of God dwell in you richly,' and abound always 'in the work of the Lord.' Thus you will find peace. Thus you will find and inherit forever the great salvation. And this brings into view, the *motive* urged in the text, for the performance of the duty commanded; the duty of escaping from a condition of sin and eternal death. Therefore,

SECONDLY, Let this *motive* be considered. '*For thy Life.*' Sinners, your life, your salvation depends on your escaping from the native opposition of your hearts to God. And is a stronger motive possible?

You have just now heard the things briefly mentioned, in which the performance of the duty consists. They are an unfeigned turning to the Lord; humility and self condemnation before God, because you have been rebels against him; that 'godly sorrow,' for sin, which 'worketh repentance unto life;' that faith in Christ, 'which worketh by love' to God, and duty; that pure, that disinterested affection for your Creator, which causes you to adore and praise him as the enemy, and the punisher of sin; and that meek, and resigned, and just, and prayerful, and exemplary, and holy manner of life before the world, as well as in your hearts, which is both the evidence and the fruit of regeneration. In these things, together with all that they imply, consists your performance of the duty considered in this discourse. The call to this duty is urgent and interesting. '*For your Life.*'

First. The life to be secured, by obedience to God, is not the life of the body. It is spiritual life; heavenly rest and peace in the soul. It is on earth, a foretaste of that sublime felicity, 'which eye hath not seen; which ear hath not heard; the greatness of which the heart of man hath not been able to conceive,' and which God has promised to all that escape from the love and dominion of sin.

It is a deliverance, in the way of holiness, from the 'wrath to come' upon all those, that both live and die, and go to judgment under the entire power of the 'carnal mind, which is enmity against God.' It is the present enjoyment, in some measure, of that peace which Christ promised, when he said in his farewell address to his disciples, 'Peace I leave with you; *my* peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.'

Here is a present acquiescence in the disposals of infinite wisdom, amidst the sorrows with which sin fills the world. 'Thy will be done,' is the submissive, the triumphant language of the obedient soul. 'The judge of all the earth will do right. The Lord reigneth.' That which is best, *will* be done. In this state of the soul there is rest, there is peace, there is life. Your attainment of this, is your attainment of life, at the same time, in which it is your deliverance from death.

Your feelings, your practice, and the revelation of truth made by your judge, all testify, as has been already declared, that you are this moment, spiritually dead. You are in a state of restlessness and ruin. For enduring satisfaction, you are trusting the creatures which God has given you to use for himself. Their proper place in your affections, is not that which you are thus giving them. You are to receive and use them only as instruments in his hand of advancing his praise in your salvation.

But you are putting confidence in them, as though you *knew* them able to render you blessed, and blessed too, in the way of enmity against your maker. You are doing this, when by all the experience of the world and of yourselves, every one of them tells you, concerning the happiness you intend they shall confer; 'It is not in me.' The truth of this affecting declaration is confirmed by every trial you make. At the close of each experiment, the anxious questions return upon you, 'What shall we do? Who will shew us any good?'

Your Maker often and often tells you the same truth. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Their mirth is like the crackling of thorns under a pot.' And it is affecting to stand and see every disappointment you suffer bringing nearer to you the the terrors of death and judgment. Thus, while in heart, the enemies of God, you are spiritually dead; 'dead in trespasses and sin;' dead to

all permanent satisfaction and peace. How strong, then, is the motive set before you, to escape for life! This motive is found in the *present* experience both of the righteous and of yourselves. In proportion to their grace, *they* have peace; while you have nothing durable but inquietude and disappointment.

Secondly. This motive is found in those *future* scenes, which according to unerring revelation, are before both *them* and *you*. Amidst the coming pains of the probationary state, they will have support, while your hearts will die within you. Under the stroke which must separate soul and body, the divine rod and staff will comfort them, while you, if conscience be awake, will sink down in despair. They will have cause to exclaim triumphantly, 'O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, for his unspeakable gift;' while you will 'mourn at the last, saying, how have we hated instruction!'

With 'joys unspeakeable and full of glory,' they look forward to the morning of the resurrection. Before you is nothing better than a certain fearful looking for 'of judgement.' They having sought by a 'patient continuance in well doing,' the honors, the glories of the heavenly world, look for eternal life." Over all your prospects hang 'clouds and darkness,' amidst which, you can behold nothing but wrathful flashes of that fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries of 'the Lord,' shall devour you forever and ever. They 'labor for the meat, that endureth unto everlasting life.' You are preparing food for the 'worm, that dieth not; fuel for the fire that shall never be quenched. Their labor in the Lord's service shall not be found vain. They know it will soon be said to them, 'Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joys of your Lord.' Your refusing, in the face of all warnings, to 'escape for you life;' refusing the love and service of God, choosing rather

the ways of death in this world, and of perdition in the world to come; will have it said unto you, 'Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' 'As ye have loved iniquity, hated righteousness, so ye shall be filled with your own devices. As ye have sowed wickedness, so shall ye reap damnation.'

Thus sinners, your happiness, your life, in both worlds, is the motive, by which you are here urged to the performance of duty. It is for your salvation that you are commanded to renounce your opposition to God. It is a kind precept which requires you to 'fly for refuge from the wrath to come, and to 'lay hold on eternal life.' And will you persevere in abusing this warning goodness of God? Will you to the last, insist upon it, that you *will* die eternally? God is saying 'turn ye from your evil ways.' Escape from all enmity of heart against your creator. With hearty submission, cast yourselves on the sovereign mercy of him, who made, and will judge you. Relinquish your controversy with the 'king of kings.' Throw down the weapons of your warfare. Entirely acquiesce in his holy government. Let the love of his laws bind you to a pious life. 'For why *will* ye die?' Why will you continue in that state of heart towards God and duty, which is the certain way to everlasting death?

Remember, such is the constitution of the probationary world, 'that if you *do* die, it is because you *will*; and that if you *will* die, you *must*.' Every promise of salvation is made, on the condition of your hating and shunning wickedness. Sinners are also instrumental of *confirming* each other in the ways of death. You must, therefore, avoid the needless society of the impious. You must escape from the influence of their sentiments, and their example. You must shun all those things, which tend to harden the heart, and sear the conscience. In a word, you must become holy and heavenly in the disposition of your

souls, or you will be inevitably overwhelmed in that ruin which God has sworn to bring upon his impenitent foes. 'Agree therefore with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him. Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near. Is he not waiting to be gracious? While it is called to day, then, hear his voice. Harden no longer your hearts, least he swear in his wrath, that ye shall never enter into his rest.'

Three remarks, shall close the discourse.

First. The conduct of careless sinners is irrational. The conduct of those alone deserves to be accounted rational, who in their calculations, are most concerned about that which is most important. To be thoughtful concerning matters of less moment, and to reject those of greater, is always proof of folly. In the things of this world, to spend life in the chace of possessions which are known to be not only less valuable than others, but positively hurtful, would, in every case, be pronounced madness.

But, ye that are careless about the salvation of your souls, such calculations and labours exactly represent your conduct in spiritual things. It is, therefore, an irrational part which you are acting. You know that earth is not your home. But your practice declares, that you never seriously consider the solemn fact. Your carelessness proves, that you feel as if you had, on the earth, 'an abiding place.' Here, your manner of life contradicts the clear dictates of your judgement. And what can be irrational, if the practical contradiction of reason and judgement, be not?

You know that you are entirely dependent on God. You know, that unless you have his approbation and blessing, you must be wretched. You know, that you cannot have the blessings of his friendship, unless you render him the honor, the obedience, the love, which are his due. You know, that disappointment and death reign over the best possessions of

the world. You know, that your present life is with you a time of trial, yes, your only time of trial, for an unchangeable and endless existence upon which you must quickly enter. You know that without unceasing vigilence, in obedience to God, you cannot possibly enjoy his favor, in the world to come. You know, that except you receive, in your soul, his holy moral image, you possess nothing which he approves. You know, that by nature, you are alienated from his love and service; and that if you never during your present life, experience an entire change, in the disposition of your hearts, towards God and duty, you are utterly unfit for his favor; nor is it possible for him to behold you with the smallest degree of approbation. You know, that you are every instant liable to be arrested and sent to his bar, for judgement. You know, that you are unfit to die and go before your judge in peace; for you know, that you are utterly destitute of that 'holiness, without which you cannot see God,' but with confusion of face. You know at the same time, that God is both offering and commanding you to accept a complete salvation from your condition of ruin and death.—Facts more interesting, more solemn, more worthy of your supreme attention, are inconceivable. They do not, they cannot exist. And yet, how do you live? Like the brutes that perish. The perception of the facts, that have been mentioned, passes slightly through the mind, but leaves no abiding impression. You conduct yourselves as though the reverse of all this was fact. You live without evangelical religion, as, though there were no heaven to secure, no hell to shun. You find yourselves approaching continually nearer to the grave and the pit of the damned, and are still careless, still indifferent, whether heaven or hell must be your endless inheritance; still practically undetermined, which of the two be most desirable. You are saying, earth, the creatures, shall yet confer upon us all that we desire. When alas the

Being who made the earth and the creatures, tells you that your trust in them will assuredly be disappointed. By your carelessness, about your salvation, you are acting this very irrational part. You are contradicting the God of truth. You are contradicting the uniform testimony of your own past experience. You are contradicting the unvarying decisions of your own consciences. By your practice, you declare, that in an irreligious, an unholy life, there is *no* danger; while you know, that in such a manner of life, there *is* perpetual and extreme danger.

Here in your spiritual concerns, there is irrationality, there is absurdity of enormous growth. How loudly you would, in the very outset, cry folly upon the conduct of your neighbour, were you to find him expecting to become opulent by gathering grapes upon thorns, and figs upon thistles.' But his conduct precisely represents your own, while you indulge the carlessly formed opinion, that, without holiness, it will be possible for you to behold God in peace. Why do you not tremble, while you perceive that in condemning your neighbor, you condemn yourselves? Why are you not alarmed, at finding yourselves so much more rational, so much more consistent, in the things of this life than in the things of the next? Why do you never, in mere worldly calculations, expect desirable effects without their appropriate causes; when in the infinitely weightier concerns of your souls, you are always practically looking for such effects as are without any competent cause? Why do you carelessly trust, that you are coming to the happy end of the pious life, without living piously? Wherefore do you indulge the very irrational thought, that you shall at length, enter into the joys of the heavenly world, without travelling the only road that leads thither? Why do you coldly expect the blessedness of the Lord's people, while you know, that you do not possess their character? Seriously consider these things.

Cease to act a part so irrational, as that of carlessness about the only object, which *can* deserve your supreme attention. And may the God of all mercy and grace dispose you to 'Escape for your life.'

Secondly. Sinners deceive themselves, while they expect happiness without piety. Of all delusions, that of self deception seems to be most criminal and fatal. Gospel piety is happiness is heaven, the soul. Impiety is restlessness, is misery. But you are persuading yourselves that this is not true. The way of real satisfaction, you persuade yourselves to believe, is not quite so strict and narrow as is represented. That entire escape from the dominion and love of rebellion against God, which he requires, you trust, is not indispensibly necessary. Thus deceived by the love of sin, you are in your spiritual concerns, crying, with the sluggard, 'A little more sleep a little more slumber; a little more folding of the hands to sleep;' all shall yet be well.

But had Lot persisted in deceiving himself, by arguing thus, he must have perished in the flames of guilty Sodom. He seems to have been much injured by the influence of the sentiments and practices so common among his wicked neighbors in that devoted city. He had in some measure, lost sight of sin's evil nature, and of the dreadful ruin to which it leads. There appears to have been in him, a degree of self-deception. He was not ready to admit that the representations of danger were strictly correct. It was with reluctance that he escaped, although the informing angels from Heaven were at the door, and the impending storm was in sight. Escape, however, he must, or sink down in the common ruin.

But if in this imperfect world, a righteous man be thus exposed to self-deception; if one who loved the Lord, was with so much difficulty persuaded to see and acknowledge the greatness of the danger there is

in wickedness; how ought you to see and to shun those delusions, which persuade you that impiety is not the broad road to destruction! Hear what God has said, and tremble at the thought of embracing any sentiments which contradict his word. 'Woe unto the wicked; it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.' Keep in your view this and a thousand similar declarations of your Maker, ye, that through the love of sin, are blinding your minds with respect to the truth; ye, that trifle with your Creator's commands; ye, that flatter yourselves with the hope of safety, although you drive far from your thoughts all concern about the great salvation; ye, that are laboring, with your whole strength, to fasten your hearts and your hands upon a world, whose fashion, as to you, passes away, and with which all your connexion will presently cease forever.

Is not your persuasion, that you shall be happy without holiness, injurious in all respects? Does it not confirm and fix you in a course that is unwise for both worlds? Is not the *present* portion of the righteous better than yours? Is not his *future* portion infinitely preferable to yours? Are not the righteous *securing*, while you are *loosing*, all that is desirable in the life that now is, and in that which is to come?

The righteous have, even now, that peace, which arises from an affectionate submission and obedience to the will of God. And as to futurity, they have the hope, which is the 'anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.' But, as to you, while deceiving yourselves, with a false belief and groundless hope; what is your remorse of conscience, when conscience gains liberty at all, to be awake; what is every disappointment here of your hopes; what are fear and horror at the thought of going into the other world; what are these torments, but a part of that hell which

sin has prepared; and whose flames sin will always keep burning. What are these facts in your own experience, but the testimonies of God, that you never can be happy, until you are holy.

While you are deceiving yourselves with the hope of happiness, without holiness, are not your sentiments the very same with those of Sodom. They had impiously cast off the fear of God. Every restraint of religion was removed. Lot exhorted and warned them to fly, by repentance, from impending wrath. But they said to him; 'No, there is no danger. There is no truth in what you say.' They loaded him with their sneers. 'This one fellow came in to sojourn among us, and he will needs be a judge.' Think, therefore, how strongly you resemble them, when you tell yourselves, that a life without piety is as safe as any. Think of that 'fiery indignation,' which their delusions brought down upon them from heaven. Think of that eternal wrath, for which your similar self-deceptions are preparing you; and speedily by repentance, 'Escape for your Life. Up, get you out of this place;' renounce these delusions of sin; 'for the Lord will destroy this city;' this 'refuge of lies,' in which you place your confidence. Nor let such as warn you to fly unto Christ for safety, seem like those that mock.

Thirdly. God will be glorious in the destruction of the wicked. He is now using means to reclaim and save you from the distress, which his endless displeasure will cause you to suffer. His 'sentence against your evil works is not speedily executed.' But his forbearance will have an end. Exhortations, warnings, commands, promises, threatnings, will cease. By all these, he is now bearing public testimony to his own goodness. Every sorrow which the wicked suffer, is a witness for God, that he is the friend of righteousness, and that he abhors iniquity. Were he to preserve his rebellious subjects from de-

served wrath, where would be the evidence of his holiness? Where could proof be found, that he is worthy of every creature's entire respect and affection?

Bear it then, always in your minds, that the goodness of God requires, either your repentance, or your endless punishment. Every display of his wrath against sin, is a display of that goodness which is his glory. Never will you be able to throw back upon your Maker, the guilt of your impiety. Your sin consists in your choice of a disposition opposed to God and duty; together with those exercises of your hearts, which spring from such a choice. This choice is your own. The guilt of it must of course, be your own guilt. Yours also, must be the tremendous consequences of their depraved character and conduct, unless you shun them by repentance, in the way of the gospel. From a condition so dreadful, 'Escape, therefore, for your life, look not behind you,' grudge not the sinful pleasures which you must forsake, by becoming savingly religious. 'Escape unto the mountains.' Embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, 'lest you be consumed.'

THE SAINT ENCOURAGED.

A SERMON.

BY

CALVIN CHAPIN,

Pastor of a Congregational Church—Wethersfield, Connecticut.

ISAIAH, iii. 10.

Say ye to the Righteous, that it shall be well with him.

WHAT is the way to the favor of God, the infinite Creator and Judge of men? The question is of vast moment to creatures who are destined to exist forever; and especially to creatures, who are on trial, for his endless approbation, or his endless displeasure.

But to this question, momentous as it is; there is no need of a doubt relative to the true answer. For nearly six thousand years, God has, in our world been bearing uniform and clear testimony, concerning his own character; concerning man's duty; and of course, concerning the only way of accountable creatures to the greatest of all blessings, the divine approbation.

In the dispensations of his providence, explained by a revelation of his grace, he has been continually saying to mankind; 'Your Creator and final disposer is holy. He is, therefore, 'the unchanging friend of righteousness; and he commands you to be righteous. He is the invariable enemy of wickedness; and he commands you not to be wicked.'

Hearers, behold him who formed, and who will certainly judge you, exhibiting, in all his management of our world, strong evidence of his love for righteousness, and hatred of wickedness. Behold him furnishing this evidence, in his treatment of Adam and Eve; in his treatment of Noah and the Old World; of Abraham and Lot; of Sodom and Gomorrah; of the Israelites in Egypt; of Pharaoh and the Egyptians; of the twelve tribes in the Wilderness; of the Righteous and Wicked in the land of Canaan; of the people visibly his, in every age, until for their wickedness, he scattered them among all nations; yea, of the world itself, in giving his 'Only begotten Son,' that a way might be prepared, for his honorably causing the wicked to become righteous, and be thus fitted for his everlasting love. All these facts, with countless others bearing exactly the same stamp, stand forth and testify, before the world, that the omnipotent Maker and Governor of all creatures and things, is the friend of righteousness and the enemy of wickedness.

Add, moreover, his many and ample promises of good to the righteous. They all have the same animating signification, with that in the text. He has, himself, from the beginning, declared; and he has continually ordered his ministering servants to declare; that, how dreadful soever may be the torments, which the wicked must suffer, '*it shall be well with the Righteous.*'

You cannot but have already observed, that in the text, a particular character is expressly designated and named. The promise is made to you, on the condition, that you possess this character. The manner of designation and expression proves certainly, that you never can possess the promised good, but on this condition. You must be righteous or it will never be well with you. You must possess the character which God requires: you must live the manner of life which he commands, in which he delights, to

which his promises are made; or know assuredly you cannot enjoy his friendship.

Are you asking, what is it to be righteous? What is it to possess the character, to which the divine promise of unspeakable good is made? *How* shall it be well with the righteous? To every one of you, the questions are more important, than you can easily conceive, Therefore,

FIRST, Contemplate the character; that of the Righteous, mentioned in the text. And,

SECONDLY, View the manner in which it shall be well with those who possess this character. 'Say ye to the Righteous, that it shall be well with him.'

FIRST, Contemplate the character; that of the righteous, mentioned in the text. 'It is your life' to know and possess that, to which, whatever it may be, God promises his blessings. And beware of comforting yourselves, with the persuasion, that you do possess the character which pleases him, while your hearts, 'deceitful above all things,' are cherishing the very opposite; that of those whom he calls wicked. Perhaps it may not be amiss to discriminate.

First. You need not be told, that your indulgence in any kind of known immorality, or impiety, proves you, in the divine view, utterly destitute of righteousness. 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against' all vicious, all profane practices. The tree, which bears them, must be bad; for they are evil fruit.

Hear the solemn declarations of your judge: 'Be not deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor theives, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.' Perhaps every vicious and profane practice of a depraved world is implied in this catalogue. If not, however, it is certain, that every one is comprehended and condemned, when it

is said; "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the unrighteousness of men."

Whatever, therefore, may be the vice in which you presume to indulge; or whatever the manner of your profanity, it impresses, as with a hot iron, upon your very foreheads, the decisive mark of perdition's children. It evinces, beyond the possibility of fair contradiction, that notwithstanding your self-flattering delusions, you are at an awful distance from every claim to the character and privileges of the righteous. Nor *can* it be well with you, so long as you retain your present temper and manner of life.

Secondly. God tells you that he can never accept a mere superficial morality, for the righteousnes which he requires. Your outward manner of life may be such as *men* do not, cannot justly condemn, while God sees your heart totally selfish and proud, altogether opposed to him, as a holy and absolute sovereign. With making *yourself* your Deity, a manner of life visibly correct, is not wholly inconsistent. An outside morality does by no means exclude that entire self-idolizing, which is enmity, rebellion, against the God of heaven.

Many, indeed, are the worldly uses of this superficial morality. But, in itself, it is not righteousness in God's sight. If you go before his bar, with nothing better than this to recommend and justify you, it is certain you must fall into condemnation. Even in the truly righteous, this outside goodness is nothing but *evidence*; it is not *proof* that they are really righteous. The command of God is; 'My son, give me thy *heart*.' Call nothing righteousness, therefore, which the heart, the affections of the soul do not produce.

You may fill up the whole of a long life with this superficial morality, and yet, in every affection of your hearts, in all their many millions of exercises, be guilty of injustice. With your showy morality, you

would shudder at the thought of injustice amidst your intercourse with mankind. If charged with the crime, you would be ready with violent resentment to exclaim, 'is thy servant a dog, that he should do this?'

But hear the commandment of Christ, 'render unto God the things which are God's!' Your withholding from your neighbor, that worldly property, which is *his* due, and which you have power to render; you would say at once, must be unjust. But do you owe nothing to God? Nay, do you not owe him every thing? Hear his claims: 'Thou shall love the Lord thy God, with *all* thy heart, and him only shalt thou serve.' And will you say, that these claims, made by a Being infinitely wise and infinitely good; a Being who gives you every thing you enjoy, are unreasonable! And what have you, which these claims do not comprehend? Yes, take it with you, into the whole of your practice, that you owe him every thing, supreme love, constant reverence, unceasing obedience and praise.

Do you render him these thing, which are his just due? If not instantly give up all you pretensions to righteousness, for the sin of injustice lies at your door, and of injustice, not merely to men, worms of the earth; this were comparatively a trifle; but to God, the greatest and best of beings. Your *hearts* must be righteous, or you have no righteousness at all. By your trust in a superficial morality, you prove yourselves guilty of continual injustice.

To this morality, this goodness in the world's view, and in your own, this fair appearance, which in your case the Omniscient being beholds, in the company of a heart hostile to himself, there is no where made a single promise of blessings. The Scribes and Pharisees had an abundance of that which *they* called righteousness. On this they depended. But Christ, instead of calling them righteous, and promising them

blessings, charged upon them criminality of the deepest dye. He said they were abominably hypocritical and wicked; that they were like vessels, which with a fair outside, inclosed articles most vile and offensive; like whited, painted sepulchres, externally beautiful, while within, they contain nothing, but the putrid and loathsome carcases of the dead.

Such, in the divine view, is that superficial morality, which many seem determined to make pass for righteousness, before a holy God. To the young man, who in the presence of Christ, affirmed that he had most carefully practised this, the searcher of hearts declared, 'yet one thing thou lackest.' His heart was idolatrous; Self was his Deity. And he intended that his wealth should answer every purpose of rendering him independent and happy. His wealth, however, was not his fault. His fair moral life was not his fault. But injuctice to God, and of course, as far as related to his temper of heart, injustice to his fellow creatures, constituted his fault. His heart had other Gods before Jehovah. The Lord made him sensible of this, when he said; 'go thy way, sell all that thou hast, and give unto the poor, and come, follow me. And he went away sorrowful!' Christ and he must now part. That outward morality, which he had all along persuaded himself to believe, would form his passport to heaven, was found unable to bear divine scrutiny. He however resolved to persevere in trusting it; for the same reason too, that *you* will not renounce it, notwithstanding all your evidence of its insufficiency. Concerning this superficial morality, this morning cloud goodness; Christ has said to his disciples, to the world and to you; 'Except your righteousness *exceed* the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,' mere fair faced moralists, 'ye cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven.' 'Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'

These are the representations of him who is truth itself. His word will abide, though the earth and the material heavens shall perish. By these he assures you, that the mimic goodness, which in the world's language, is called morality, is nothing that God will ever accept and reward for righteousness. How many soever may be its worldly uses, it is the *appearance* only, without the *reality* of goodness. It is a stream without a fountain. It is a superstructure without a foundation, and must therefore fall. Every hope built upon it is presumption, and must therefore perish.

Nor can mere *professions* of righteousness constitute you righteous before God. You are indeed commanded, every one of you, to *profess* righteousness. But you are previously to *be* righteous, otherwise your profession is dishonest. You are treating God with a solemn mockery, which he will not suffer to go unpunished. You are going to judgment, in the way of them, to whom he will say; 'Depart from me, I know you not.' And your everlasting portion must be with hypocrites, with unbelievers, with the worst of beings.

You are not, then, righteous, if you indulge in the practice of one known vice, or in any impious habit of life. Nor is it possible for even the fairest superficial morality; nor for any mere *professions*, to constitute you righteous before God.

But *Thirdly*. The righteous spoken of in the text are the regenerate, the truly pious. Theirs is the disposition of heart to which all divine promises are made. It is that in creatures, which renders them *like* their Creator. It is in the beauty and the glory, no less than the happiness of the holy.

But, hearers, you are perhaps inquiring, what are the essential attributes of this very desirable and happy character? They are summed up in a single word—Love—Love supreme to God, because the

soul has a perception of his glorious lovliness, as a Holy being; as one that unchangeably delights in that which is right, and hates and condemns that which is wrong—Love also to his commandments describing duty; and love to all the possible subjects of happiness.

All the accountable inhabitants of our world, and you among the rest, are by nature, 'children of wrath.' Instead of loving God, you hated and opposed him and his ways. He said concerning you all, 'There is none that doeth good, no not one.' If you are *now* righteous, it is because you have been regenerated by the operations of his holy spirit in your hearts. It is matter of mere grace through the merits of Christ, that you are not this moment, travelling the broad road to destruction. If you have thus, through infinite grace, been made righteous, humility, before God, is one leading exercise of your hearts. You have abasing views of yourselves; for you see, that you have acted most unreasonably, as well as most criminally, in all your wickedness of heart. 'Behold I am vile,' is the language of every regenerate soul. At the same time while humbling yourselves, you will exalt and magnify God, for the display of his boundless compassion in the plan of redeeming grace, and in plucking *you*, as brands, from everlasting burnings.

You are loathing yourselves, as sinners. You are hating all known iniquity. You see the odiousness, no less than the deadly nature, and fatal consequences of wickedness. And in such a view of sin, together with cordial resolutions in favor of a righteous life, arising from this view of it, you exercise that 'Godly sorrow, which is unto salvation, needing no repentance.'

While you behold your entire ruin by sin, you are led to the Lord Jesus Christ. In him you see a propitiation for sin. You read with holy exultation, 'God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten

Son, that whosoever believeth on him, may not perish, but have everlasting life. He is able to save, unto the uttermost, the chief of sinners. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that has risen, who is even now at the right hand of God, and who maketh intercession for us.' You behold, in the Lord Jesus such a Saviour as you need; a Saviour from the love and dominion, as well as from the misery of sin. You are pleased with all that you can learn of his character and atonement. You are charmed with the *kind* of salvation which he offers. You affectionately receive him, as your Redeemer and your guide. You cast your souls upon him for spiritual healing and sanctification.—You go to him for that bread of life, which alone can nourish and invigorate you amidst the difficulties you must meet, in travelling to the mansions made ready in your heavenly father's house. This your faith works by love to God and duty. It renders you victorious over the world. The world's numberless enticements and dangers are, by this grace, overcome. It makes you more than conquerors, through him that hath loved you, and given himself for you.'

This holy temper of heart, begun in regeneration, and increased by progressive sanctification, is the foundation of your righteousness. From this will certainly proceed an outwardly righteous life. With the holy charity of the gospel, loving your neighbor as yourselves, you will be just, and merciful, and kind; 'doing good unto all men as you have opportunity.' Your conduct before God, will be moved by his fear and love. You will delight in the word, the sabbaths, the worship, and the ordinances of the Lord. Self examination, devotion, prayer, submission and meekness, will be the habits of your life. Such is the character, of those designated in the text. Such is your character, hearers, and such is your manner of life, if God owns you, as righteous. If this be

your character, it shall certainly be *well with you*. God orders his ministers to declare it in his name. And you may place unlimited confidence in the truth of the declaration. Only find gospel evidence that you possess the character of the righteous, and you will infallibly partake of all their glorious privileges. Do you ask, what these privileges are? For an answer behold,

SECONDLY, The manner in which it shall be well with the Righteous.

And here, all the blessings, that penitent sinners are capable of receiving, come into view. Much is said about blessings. Do you ask the meaning of the term? Be it thus defined. Whatever God will make the means of rendering you, during the whole of your existence, more happy than you could otherwise be, is to you personally, a blessing. This is as clearly true, as it is that happiness itself is desirable. Let this thought be kept in your minds, and it will assist you in perceiving the truth of the sentiments, which occur in this part of the discourse.

But here also it may be proper to discriminate.

First, Repenting sinners—the righteous of our perishing world, have, in the text, no promise, that while they continue on trial for eternity they shall be preserved from all natural evil. Righteousness will indeed save you from suffering the infamy and wretchedness that by the very constitution itself, according to which God governs the world, are inseperable from drunkenness, lewdness, lying, profanity, and all other visible vices. Nevertheless according to that constitution you must in the body, suffer pain, disease, and dissolution. 'Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,' is a sentence equally applicable to the righteous and the wicked. 'Once to die, is appointed unto men; is appointed unto you. Natural evils in this world; not excepting death itself; must pass 'upon all; for all have sinned.'

Nor have you here, any promise of preservation from disappointment in your lawful earthly calculations and labors. Nor is there so much as an implied intimation, that because you are righteous, God will give you worldly wealth or power. Neither have you a promise, that your best beloved relations; your most precious created possessions; shall be continued in your enjoyment. Neither is it to be understood that God will preserve you on account of your righteousness from being stript of every worldly comfort, which you may have called your own. He does not here tell you that your righteousness shall keep your tenderest and most affectionate natural ties from being dissolved. He does not say, that your heart shall never by the breaking of these be filled with sorrows, which utterly refuse to be comforted by the world.

On the contrary, you know, that your firmest hold, upon creatures, must be broken. Of all this you are assured, by the uniform experience of the world and by the declarations of God. 'In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer I have overcome the world.' The moment, grace made you righteous, your idolatrous attachment, to the world, was in a degree, overcome. When, therefore, you feel these connexions and attachments breaking, you can triumphantly say, 'The will of the Lord be done. It is right, it is best, as he ordains.' 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith'—your faith in the all-perfect government of God.—This victory, however, is not complete in the present life, for your righteousness is not, on earth, complete. Therefore,

Secondly, There is found, in the text, no promise, that the righteous shall, in this world, be preserved from all moral evil, all wickedness. You are not to expect complete deliverance from sin, till you reach the 'assembly of the just, made perfect,' before the

throne of God. In the all important work of regeneration, you experienced a change, from a state of entire sin, to a state of only begun holiness. It is a very humbling truth, that the dominion of sin, in your hearts, is only in a degree, subdued, while you remain in a depraved world. This, you are assured, on divine authority, is according to the constitution of providence and grace, by which God governs the world and his church.

Be it, however, remembered, that this fact furnishes neither excuse nor palliation for wickedness remaining in the righteous. Wickedness is, at least, as criminal in the righteous, as it is in the unrighteous. It is always, in all creatures, and in all worlds, perfectly inexcusable.

Your knowledge of the fact that you are not, on earth, to be entirely delivered from moral evil, is so far from furnishing you with an excuse, that it is your most solemn and alarming admonition of danger. The remaining corruptions of your own heart, joined with 'principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world,' are formidable foes. Against these, you must pray, and watch, and strive. There is in the christian warfare, no rest from the annoyance of enemies; and enemies, too, that are long experienced and artful; enemies by whose numerous and deep laid devices, you are constantly exposed to be 'cast down wounded. Your calling and election' are to be made sure by diligence in the pious life. Your salvation must be daily wrought out, with the deep anxiety implied in 'fear and trembling.' You must be evermore, intent on that business, which your Father in heaven assigns you. The moment, of your regeneration, begins your spiritual conflict; and, thenceforward you are to fight against sin, in yourself, and in the world around you. It is by constant exertion, that you are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.' Sloth, indifference, a disposi-

tion to rest in past supposed attainments; must be viewed as dreadful witnesses, that you never were righteous; and that all your pretended experience is no other than the delusive and deadly work of the great adversary.

Remember, christian, you are a progressive being. It is the will of your Saviour that your triumphs over sin be not rendered, at once, complete. You are by remains of depravity, and by the powers of darkness, to be buffeted, tried, and proved. There is a 'need be' that you be in heaviness through manifold temptations.' This divine plan of preparing you; of preparing all the redeemed, for the world of glory, is wonderfully calculated, both to humble you, and to increase your faith in that Saviour, without whose grace you daily find, that you must perish.

It will not, therefore, 'be well with the righteous,' because he is while in the probationary world, to be preserved from all evil, either natural or moral.

But, *Thirdly*. Ye that through grace, possess the character, to which the promises are made, 'it shall be well with you, because all the evils, both natural and moral, to which God sees it best to subject you, on earth, shall be made the means of personal good to you. You are now in a world, whose concerns are all carried on by the instrumentality of means.—Do you ask how the evils you experience on earth can be means of good to you? The Lord claims it as his peculiar prerogative, to bring order out of confusion, light out of darkness, good out of evil.

But will he make your sufferings and deeds instrumental of your good? Yes, ye subjects of his grace; hear the declaration of his Holy Spirit.—'And we know, that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them, who are the called, according to his purpose. The affirmation is universal. 'All things; all events, in your experience; not the 'joyous' only, but the 'grevious,'

shall, in the directing hand of your Saviour, be instruments of your welfare. They shall be made blessings to you. You will please to recollect the definition already given of a blessing. It is 'every thing which God will make the means of rendering you, through the whole of your existence, happier, than you could otherwise be.' Now you have his promise, that he will cause this to be the desirable result of all events on the state of your hearts, and consequently on your enjoyments for ever.

You are naturally too little concerned about the spiritual effect of those dispensations, which *gratify* your worldly wishes. They are such as *disappoint* and *distress* you; that bring serious consideration. But both those which gratify, and those which distress, are all mingled, in the promises of God to the righteous. He tells you, that both joyous and grievous events shall all 'work together for your good.'

But in what *manner* is this accomplished? By their sanctification to your spiritual improvement. And *when* are events, both joyous and grievous, as they at present affect you, sanctified to your spiritual improvement? You often, you habitually pray, that God would sanctify to you his dealings. Offered, as all evangelical prayer is, with entire submission to the Divine Counsels, it is a highly pertinent and appropriate petition. But what is the true intent of this prayer to God? Is it that he would make every event the means of your 'growth in grace;' of your progress in holiness; of increase in heavenly, mindedness, as you go forward towards death and judgment.

The question therefore, returns. *When* are events sanctified to the christian's use? *Then*, when God makes them the means of the soul's proficiency in heavenly things. And in what does this most valuable, this holy, proficiency consist? In seeing more of the heart's vileness, together with an increasing self-abhorence, humiliation, and hatred of sin; in a growing strength of faith on the Son of God, in more firm-

ly establishing *habits* of prayer and devotion, in an improving tenderness of concern for the honor of God; a more vigorous affection for the commandments and service of God, in daily progressive desires after enjoyments purely spiritual and heavenly. In these things, christians, is 'growth in grace' comprehended. Every divine dealing, whether of Providence or grace, and whether, to your natural wishes, gratifying or confounding, if made in Christ's hand, the means of producing these effects, on your hearts and conduct, is *sanctified* to you. It is a blessing; you will be the happier for it eternally.

On the other hand, no event, however exquisite may be the present pleasure which it confers, if not thus sanctified, if not made to produce these and similar effects, deserves, in any proper sense, to be called a blessing. Unsanctified, your health, your friends, your affluence, yea, your very table would become 'a snare and a trap.' They *may* be, you have reason to fear they *will* be means of checking your progress in pious practice and enjoyment, and of 'piercing the soul with many sorrows.' Beware, christians, beware of spiritual sloth. Beware of worldly temptations. Beware of carnal enticements. They work the present destruction of holy improvement. They bring a temporary blast upon the tree of life, planted by grace in the heart. They diminish the evidence, that maintains heavenly hope. They send you mourning, to grope your way, amidst darkness, along the 'vale of tears.' And they do this by preventing the present and complete sanctification of events to your spiritual use. You cannot, indeed, long and habitually indulge in them. You are warned, that duty forbids your indulging in them, at all. Although God has bound himself, by a gracious promise, to sanctify, for good, unto all the righteous, every event, yet this abounding grace gives you no licence to continue in sin. If any person believe himself righteous in

God's sight, and yet indulge in known sin, because God has promised to sanctify all things for good unto the righteous, that person's belief is fallacious. He is no christian. His conduct is highly presumptous. Despair, so long as he holds fast his present temper of mind, ought to seize the place of his present confidence and hope. The righteous are *dead* to sin. 'And how shall they, who are dead to sin, live with knowledge and design any longer therein.' They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and and lusts.'

It shall be 'well,' then 'with the righteous,' because all events, all trials, all duties and sufferings, while encompassed by a nature which sin defiles, shall be sanctified, shall be made means of their 'growth in grace,' of their progress in holiness.

Ye, 'whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life,' it shall be well with you, *in this world.*— Amidst the darkness of infirmity and sin, ye shall rejoice in the light of God's countenance. When suffering pain and disappointment, ye shall have a supporting submission to the divine will. Although earth and hell frown, ye shall rejoice, 'for the Lord reigns.'

'It shall be well with you,' in comparison with the openly vicious, because your love of righteousness will, through grace, effectually preserve you from the worldly miseries to which many of the wretched are subjected. Drunkenness and profanity, lying and theft, lewdness, calumny and murder, in a word, every vice and crime that can be named, if detected and proved, certainly brings evil upon the guilty person. Not a few, comprehended in this discription, are brought to the distresses of needless poverty and disease. Not a few to the infamy and wretchedness of the dungeon, the pillory, the gallows. But from all these, righteousness is your security; for abhoring, you will *shun* both the pernicious deeds and the punishment of such evil doers.

'It shall be well with you' 'when your flesh and your hearts fail. Yea, though you walk through the valley and shadow of death, you will not need to fear evil, for the rod and staff of God *they* will comfort you.' At the bar of the eternal judge, 'it shall be well with you;' for your souls will be found washed in that 'blood, which cleanseth from all sin,' and clad in the white garments of that righteousness which is complete. There, by him who holds in his hand the retributions for eternity, will it be said unto you, 'Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joys of your Lord.' Yes, ye righteous, it shall for ever and ever be well with *you*, for you will be called to inherit the everlasting kingdom prepared for the saints of the most high God.

The subject is practical, and suggests many useful remarks. Two of these distinctly considered, shall close the discourse.

First. By the instructions derived from this portion of God's word, religious people may try their experience. This is the more important, because we are told of religious people that have nothing of saving piety. 'This people draweth near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips they honor me, but their heart is far from me, saith the Lord.' 'Not every one,' says Christ, 'that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my father, who is in heaven. Many will say unto me, in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name have cast out devils; and in thy name have done many wonderful works: And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' The light of the great day will disclose facts dreadfully confounding to these people. It will show them, that although they had much religion, they had no true piety. Their religion kept conscience tolerably quiet, and their wicked hearts, and the adver-

sary persuaded them, that they had religion enough. Hearers, take heed, that you be not found at last in their number.

The subject demands it of you, that you ask yourselves what evidence you have, that, in God's sight, you are righteous? Do you love God, as holy, and his commandments, as holy, just, and good? Do you rejoice in his laws, which condemn you; and do you condemn yourselves, as sinners? Do you wish for that kind of happiness, the enjoyment of which will render the righteous always blessed?

Do you pray to God, heartily wishing, that his will may be done; and that your wills may be, in all things, conformed to his? When you ask him to give you health, friends, long life, prosperity, and wisdom, do you ask for these desirable things with the wish, that they may be means of helping you to heaven? When you receive them, and other worldly favors, do you grow more humble; see more of your own vileness, as sinners; get a worse opinion of yourselves and find your hearts more fervently engaged in the duties of piety? When you suffer natural evil; when pain and disease fill your mortal bodies; when disappointments are set in array against you; when your earthly schemes of business and pleasure are baffled; when bereavements lay your choicest creature comforts low in the dust; when calamaties are commissioned thus to try you, what is the effect? Do you yield, under the divine discipline? Does the heart within you, grow tender? Is pride brought down? Do you look up, adore, and praise, and bow before, Him, whose hand has touched you? Are your inquiries more earnest, than before, what the Lord would have you do? What are the lessons of duty, he would have you learn and practice? As these natural evils break your hold upon the earth, so ask yourselves, whether they diminish your attachment to things beneath heaven?

And how are you affected by the discovery of moral evil—wickedness that was unknown to yourselves, untill the Spirit of God laid open, to your view, more of that deceitfulness which there is in sin? Does every discovered sin throw you upon your knees, before God in humble, but hearty self condemnation; and in earnest entreaty, for that repentance which has the promise of pardon? In *false* religion, the heart is stupid, even amidst discovered sins. It is hard. It is a 'heart of stone.' Or if there be feeling, there is also self justification, and an attempt to throw back the blame upon the spotless Creator. Here is rebellion marked with the guilt of no common aggravations. It is high handed hostility against heaven's glorious king. Is this your character and conduct? Or does every known sin bring you quickly to God and cause you individually to smite upon your breast and say, 'Behold I am vile; God be merciful to me a sinner?

Are all divine dispensations sanctified? Are they means of your 'growth in grace?' Do they all, 'whether for the present, joyous or grievous,' draw you and keep you nearer and nearer to God? Have you evidence,' that all things do 'work together for your good; your spiritual prosperity? Is your love to God and every known duty encreasing, like the rising light of the morning, progressive continually towards the perfect splendor of noon day? Is it like a grain of mustard seed, springing up and soon to become a tree? Is it like leaven hid in three measures of meal and quickly to diffuse its influence through the whole lump? Do you wish to go to heaven because that is a world, where the redeemed are intirely freed from sin; filled with humility and rendered happy only in the love and practice of holiness? Ask yourselves these questions. Try your experience. Know if you are righteous. Your salvation depends upon it. Beware of deception. You

have one to judge you, whom you cannot deceive.

SECONDLY, Righteousness is man's *only valuable possession*. This, to depraved creatures, is the purchase and the gift of Christ. But the manner in which creatures receive the possession, does not at all change its nature. In a wicked creature's being made righteous, infinite grace furnishes matter of endles admiration and praise. But the worth of righteousness itself is now the subject of remark. It is valuable, because it is a way of real and enduring happiness. It is, hearers, your *only* valuable possession, because it is your *only* way of present and perpetual blessedness. Other possesions whether they consist in health and long life; in earthly affluence and power; in temporal ease and affectionate friends; or in high intellectual attainments; are certainly worth nothing to you, only so far as God, by sanctifying them to your spiritual use, makes them the means of helping you to the attainment of righteousness.

This is the 'Godliness which is profitable for all things, and which has the promise of both worlds.' This is that wisdom 'which is from above; that wisdom whose ways are pleasantness, and whose paths are all peace.' This is that 'pearl of great price,' which would be cheaply purchased, though it were to cost you all you might possess besides. This is that gain, which rescues your souls from perdition, and fits you for never ending glory. 'And what,' on the other hand 'shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole of this world and loose his soul?'

What then can be valuable; what can be worthy of your earnest and unceasing pursuit, besides that possession, which the holy Discerner and Judge of all hearts, will acknowledge as righteousness? Get this wisdom therefore, 'whose price is above rubies, and with all your getings, get this understanding.'

Would you have it well with your souls forever? Then pursue nothing but under the direction of a single eye, to the attainment of this righteousness. And accept the exhortation to seek this *immediately*, not forgetting, that 'delays are dangerous.' Why will you be wretched till to-morrow, when you may be happy to-day? Why will you put your souls longer to the risk of eternal damnation, when they may be instantly rendered safe for heaven? And as to present enjoyment, why will you longer starve on husks, yes, and in company with the swine of the mire too, when there is heavenly bread enough and to spare, offered for your acceptance? Receive, then, without delay, the offered salvation, the best possession, which even Omnipotence can confer. Receive, in your souls, the righteousness of the Redeemer, and 'it shall be well with you.' How desirable to possess such a character; how ineffably desirable to so live in the sight of God, as to have his promise, that you shall be safe; his promise that nothing shall hurt you! How much better than the wealth of worlds, to look forward with the christian's hope, the hope that shall never shame you with disappointment, and expect, because God has promised it, that you shall soon join the society, and be perfectly blessed in the holy services of the heavenly world; that you shall soon join the innumerable company around the throne of God and the Lamb; that you shall soon join those holy hosts, who cease not day nor night, to sing the new song, saying 'Alleluia, blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever.'—Amen.

THE GROUNDS OF THE BELIEVER'S TRIUMPH IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

A SERMON.

DELIVERED ON A SACRAMENTAL OCCASION.

BY THE REVEREND

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GAL. vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

PERHAPS, there is no surer criterion of a man's inward and ruling character, of the noble or base sentiments of his heart, than the quality of the objects in which he principally glories. If we see a man exulting in exterior advantages, in a graceful person or address, or in worldly wisdom and power, wealth and reputation, and the tinsel splendor which accompanies them, we immediately pronounce him to possess a superficial, contracted, and ignoble mind. But if a person appears to place his chief glory in intellectual, moral, or religious accomplishments, his character strikes the judicious eye as in some degree noble and excellent. Yet even here, there is room for fatal deception: for a character, remarkable for attachment even to the cause of religion, may be very defective, yea worthless, in the view of Heaven; because it may want the main spring and soul of moral excellence, and be only a mere artful or refined modification of ruling selfishness and pride.

Such in fact was the complexion of many christian professors, and even teachers in the apostolic age. A spurious set of religious instructors had insinuated themselves into several of the churches, and that of Gallatia in particular, and poisoned the minds of many of its members. These teachers and their proselytes gloried in their zeal for religion; that is, for the external appendages of it, for the showy but antiquated ceremonies of the Jewish ritual; while they overlooked and opposed their true spirit and design. The apostle, having with great force of argument and eloquence vindicated and established the true gospel scheme, against the corrupt mixtures of these heretical seducers, proceeds at the close of this excellent epistle, to sum up *their* character, and contrast it with his own. They gloried in making a fair shew in the flesh, and in seducing over great numbers to their own party. *He* glories, not in the shadow or pompous parade of religion, but in the reality; not in gaining proselytes to his own cause, but in enlisting the souls of men under the banner of a crucified Redeemer. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

This solemn declaration of St. Paul, respecting himself, presents the moral picture of every genuine christian, and therefore fairly leads to the following inquiry---

On what grounds does the christian believer so highly esteem and even triumph in the cross of Christ?

The phrase here employed to express the object of the apostle's triumph, denotes, not barely the visible scene, much less the material engine, of our Lord's sufferings on Mount Calvary; but the whole series of of his humiliation, of which his death on the cross, was the most eminent and the crowning instance. These sufferings of the Saviour, and the virtue or obedience which he exercised in them, viewed in all their connexions, exhibit a spectacle most august

and magnificent; a spectacle, which God himself beholds with divine satisfaction, and which angels contemplate with awful rapture. No wonder then, that redeemed men, that penitent and humble believers, who owe their life, their hope, their all, to the bleeding cross, regard it with high esteem and exulting joy.

For, in the first place, they behold in it the most majestic and the most endearing display of the divine perfections.

The atoning sacrifice of Christ holds up the moral character and government of God to the view of the intelligent system, in a light equally and transcendently awful and amiable. *Awful*, as it represents him devoting the favorite of his bosom to the most complicated and unparralleled sufferings, rather than he would shew the least indulgence to sin. *Amiable*, as it represents this terrible display of justice, to flow, not from any want of tenderness towards the excellent sufferer; for the *Saviour* himself was at all times the object of his Father's inconceivable affection, and was now doing that, with which he was infinitely well pleased: and the whole scene of his humiliation was also the appointment and fruit of the richest love and compassion in God toward our revolted, miserable race. This manifestation of divine severity, therefore, on the person of our representative, was evidently dictated by a wise, impartial, comprehensive benevolence, by the supreme regard which Jehovah, as the head of the moral world, owes to his own honor and the public good.

The cross of Christ, then, is the most striking, practical comment on that most amiable character of Deity—'God is love.' For it collects all the scattered rays of divine excellence to a point, and unites them in one blaze of glorious love. It exhibits the divine wisdom and power, holiness and justice, as but so many different modes, or exhibitions, of enlightened, unbounded benevolence, by which it inva-

riably seeks, and most effectually reaches, it's one favorite object, the universal good.

In the cross, we behold the divine greatness endeared by goodness, and goodness enhanced and awfully dignified by its union with greatness. We see the stern face of justice softened into the gentle, alluring aspect of mercy; while mercy is sacredly guarded, and made an object of veneration, by the union of justice. In a word, the divine character, in its various branches or modifications, is here unfolded to view, in a manner peculiarly marvellous and surprising, plain and familiar, harmonious and complete, benign and endearing.

No wonder, then, that the gospel believer, who possesses a good moral taste, who is a cordial friend to God and his glory, should be supremely delighted with the cross of Christ; should triumph in a display of Deity at once so glorious and so beneficent; especially when he beholds those very circumstances enhancing this display, which to a superficial eye seem most to eclipse it. The pain, the disgrace, the appearance of criminality and baseness, attending that kind of execution, to which the founder of our religion submitted, have been urged by its foes, as the greatest objection against it. But this seeming badge of infamy is one of the brightest ornaments of christianity For hereby the death of its great author was made to correspond with his life. It was fit, that a life of such voluntary, extreme poverty, meanness, and sorrow should be completed by a death uncommonly bitter and odious; that the union of both, might form one entire and glorious sacrifice to the cause of truth and virtue, to the honor of God, and the happiness of man. It was fit that *He* should publicly die a reputed malefactor before men, who had espoused the cause of real and notorious criminals in the sight of God; that *He* should be condemned and executed, by the sentence of public justice, and of God's visible

minister here below, who had undertaken by his death to satisfy the public justice of the Supreme Ruler of the universe. In a word, it was wise and congruous, that the sufferings of such a public character should be marked with a degree of infamy and sorrow, which might best suit and demonstrate, both the greatness of his own love and zeal, and of our criminality and ill desert; which might best illustrate the grandeur both of the divine perfections, and of the future inheritance hereby procured for his followers; and which might exhibit to them the most complete and encouraging pattern of patient, constant, self-denied virtue and obedience; and so mark out to their feet, the path which must lead them through affliction to glory.

Which leads us to observe farther, that in the cross we have the brightest manifestation of the glories of the redeemer. The depth of his abasement operated as a foil to set off the majesty of his person and the splendor of his character. Never did *He* display before to equal advantage, such composed, gentle, condescending dignity. The successive stages of his last sufferings, in the garden of Gethsemane, in the hall of the high priest, in the court of Herod, at the tribunal of Pilate, on the hill of Calvary, were so many theatres, on which he publicly acted the sublime of virtue; on which he displayed his immoveable *constancy* in the cause of truth and rectitude; his triumphant *meekness* and *patience* under the most injurious treatment and the most grievous afflictions; his entire resignation to the will of God, and peaceable submission to the law and power of man; his invincible attachment to the divine honor and our happiness; his unshaken faith and trust in his heavenly father, under so sharp a trial; his unexampled charity and greatness of soul in pitying, excusing, and praying for his very murderers. These excellent virtues shine forth from the ignominious cross, with

a lustre peculiarly eminent and conspicuous; and at once reflect honor on the suffering Saviour, and the father who sent him, and tend to establish the faith, encourage the imitation, and awaken the joy and triumph of his followers.

And while this great sufferer is thus enobled by his own resplendent graces, all nature around him attests his dignity, and solemnizes his death. See the Sun drest in black, the earth trembling, the rocks rending, the graves pouring forth their dead; his judge, his executioner, one of his fellow sufferers, and even the scoffing multitude, uniting in various ways to do him honor!

Again, the extensive *benefits*, which flow from the cross of Christ, form another source of triumph to the real christian. The cross is the instrument of complete victory over all the enemies of God and of man. It disarms and confounds the devil with his own weapons. It crucifies the world by disparaging its vain pomp, and delusive pleasures; by baffling its most formidable errors, and by converting its heaviest afflictions into instruments of final victory and glory. It exhibits a most forcible pattern and persuasive for mortifying the flesh. It condemns and destroys sin. It scatters the terrors of death, and will finally swallow it up in victory. And while it thus pours confusion on all the powers of darkness, it diffuses new light, life, purity and joy, through all the regions of earth and of heaven. It confirms all the myriads of holy angels in their celestial bliss, while it opens to their expanding minds new and perpetual sources of improvement and delight, and replaces the vacant seats of their lost associates, with large colonies of kindred, purified spirits, from this distant, polluted region.

But what tongue of man or angel can do justice to the benefits, which redeemed sinners of our race derive from the mysterious death of their Head! It is the

price and seal of their pardon; it is the moral ground of their acceptance with heaven. It introduces penitent believers to the friendship, the family, the soul reviving fellowship of the infinite Being. It procures and conveys the sanctifying, comforting spirit, with the divine word and ordinances. By these, joined with the continual co-operation of his providence, the exalted Saviour is continually carrying into effect the glorious and saving purposes of his death, is extending the triumph of his gospel from age to age, till at length this sacred leaven shall leaven the whole lump of mankind, and all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ.

And indeed the doctrine of the cross, is, in its own nature, a most powerful, persuasive mean of reforming a degenerate world: for in it 'shine the noblest truths; the strongest motives sting, and sacred violence assaults the soul.' The love of Christ in redemption, constrains every person who cordially believes it, to live not to himself, but to him who died for him and rose again.

After what has been said, it may seem almost needless to add, that a crucified, atoning Savior is the central object of the whole system of divine revelation and providence. All the successive discoveries and operations of Deity, respecting the church, from the original lapse to the advent of the Messiah; and all the great dispensations of providence throughout the world; were so many parts of one great mediatorial plan, all pointing to, paving the way for, and receiving their consummation in, the cross of Christ. This one object pervades, enlivens, cements, both the Old Testament and the New.—It gives light, and force, and completion to the various predictions and promises, services and sacrifices, emblems and figures, of the one, while it imparts strength and union to the several doctrines,

precepts, and motives of the other, and spreads over the whole scheme a distinguishing and transcendent lustre.

We see then the main grounds of the triumph expressed in the text; or the reasons, why the illuminated, purified christian supremely glories in his master's cross. He sees inscribed upon it, as with a sunbeam, the full orbed lustre of the divine perfections, the superior dignity and virtue of the Mediator, the improved order and perfection of the moral system, the confusion of hell, the deliverance of earth, and the triumph of heaven. At the same time he sees, he feels, that his own pardon, holiness and peace, all his comfort in time and hope for eternity, flow from the same source; while the worth and sweetness of these privileges, and the love and merit, to which he owes them, are transcendently heightened and endeared by a recollection of his former guilt and misery, and a painful consciousness of his present imperfection and unworthiness, which greatly swell upon his view as he contemplates his suffering, atoning Saviour. Must not all these views combined call up the fervent and elevated, yet modest and humble triumph of the christian believer? Must not every feeling of regular self-love, and even of self-abasement, as well as of benevolence, gratitude, and piety, concur to swell the the tide of his joy!

'What heart of ſtone but glows at thoughts like theſe!
'Such contemplations mount us, and ſhould mount
'The mind ſtill higher: nor ever glance on man
'Unraptured, uninflamed.'

But the cross of Christ will appear in its fullest glory, when the minor object of this vast plan of divine benevolence shall be completely attained; when the top stone of the mighty fabrick shall be laid; when all the enemies of God and his church shall be finally subdued, the ruins of the fall entirely re-

paired, the glory and happiness of redeemed men and elect angels advanced to the highest pitch under one all-glorious head; and as the result of all, the glory of God and his Christ displayed and promoted in an inconceivable degree! What created mind can compute the sum total of happiness and glory, resulting from the consummation of this great work of eternal wisdom and love; a work, which as it originated in the councils of eternity, shall extend its improving and felicitating effects through a duration of endless, and evergrowing bliss!

On a review of our subject, it is natural to reflect, how greatly does the good christian differ from all other characters. The votaries of this world exult in their hoarded treasures, their sensual delights, their ensigns of power and honor: the devotees of nature, glory in exploring and revealing her secrets: the haughty infidel triumphs in the strength of human reason, or the beauty of moral virtue, while perhaps he practically treats both with contempt. The merely nominal believer, while he professedly inlists under the banner of the cross, yet by cold ingratitude, or presumptuous confidence, by a heart secretly dovoted to other objects, or an infidel disobedient life, tramples the Saviour under his feet. But the genuine follower of the Lamb, by the piercing eye of faith, sees at once the truth and excellency of the gospel of Christ, and the comparative emptiness of all rival objects. He sees this doctrine surrounded with such glorious characters of divinity, both internal and external, that he glories in believing, professing, and obeying it himself, in teaching and recommending it to others, and, if called to it, in suffering reproach, pain, and even death for its sake.

Let me then respectfully put the question to my audience, do your hearts and lives echo this language? Do you glory in a crucified Saviour? Do you rejoice

in Him, not because you have an enthusiastic confidence, that he died for you in particular, or a pleasing hope that his redeeming love and merit will protect you from the sword of justice, and ensure your final bliss, without any previous conformity on your part to his example and laws; but because you are heartily reconciled to and pleased with the true design of his mediation and death; which was to honor the character and law of God, condemn and destroy sin, and restore and promote the interests of holiness? Do you habitually feel and act out the same sentiments of heart toward God, toward sin, and toward the cause of universal goodness, which Christ displayed in his obedience unto death? In short, is your triumph in the cross, a solemn, reverential, soul abasing, and purifying affection? While it elevates the mind and enraptures the heart, does it kindle your love, gratitude, devotion, penitence, and every grace and virtue, to the highest pitch?

If so let me invite you to approach with cheerful confidence to that sacred ordinance, which some of you have in prospect, the next Lord's day; an ordinance, which concenters in one striking point of view, all the high discoveries, all the surprising, interesting objects, which the cross and the gospel of Christ set before us! With what mingled emotions, then, of penitential sorrow and grateful joy should communicants draw near to the altar of God in that sacrament! With what holy triumph should they there join the millions of glorified spirits in heaven, as well as the church universal on earth, in singing the new song of the Lamb that was slain!

In fine, let impenitent sinners look on that awful and melting spectacle, the bleeding cross, and be struck with grief and sorrow at those sins, by which they practically approve and join with the persecutors and murderers of their Lord!! Let professing christians remember, that, as followers of a suffer-

ing yet victorious leader, it becomes them to keep his cross constantly in view, as their guide and pattern, as their comfort and glory; and thus to be cheerfully travelling towards heaven, in the same road of humble, patient, resigned, heroic virtue, which their Lord has trod before them. Encompassed on every side with so great a cloud of witnesses, with the Captain of our salvation at our head, 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin, which doth so easily beset us, and 'let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

"Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die."—Rev. iii. 2.

A SERMON.

BY THE REVEREND

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HAGGAI 3. 5.

Then came the word of the Lord to Haggai, the prophet, saying, is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of Host, consider your ways.

THE reproof and admonition contained in this passage was recorded for our instruction. And that we may make a right application and improvement, it is to be observed that the the Jews, to whom it was sent, were newly returned from captivity; which was a punishment inflicted on them for their sins, especially for their idolatry, and neglect of the ordinances of divine worship. It should then have been their first and great concern to take effectual measures for the rebuilding of the temple, and making provision for the due administration of these ordinances—But, meeting with difficulty and opposition from their enemies, they were too soon and easily discouraged; And though they had not determined finally to abandon this undertaking, yet they seem not to have been sorry that they had so fair an excuse for delaying this work of piety; saying, 'that the time was not come that the Lord's house should be built.' This gave them opportunity to provide themselves fair, commodious habitations, and enjoy themselves in their ceiled houses, when they had so

much reason to be humbled under the frowns of providence. For this their improper conduct, the prophet, in the name of God, reproves and expostulates with them; and admonishes them to consider their ways. And the admonition may also be seasonable and instructive to us, on whom the ends of the world are come. For the fault here reproved, even a want of zeal for the house and worship of God, and an over fondness for private worldly interests, and enjoyments, is at least as blamable in christians, as it ever was in the Jews.

It should also be considered that the temple was a type of the church of Christ, which is expressly stiled the house of the living God, in which he by his spirit dwells, and is worshiped in spirit and truth. And as the Jews were blamable for having no more zeal for the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem, and being so easy and pleased with their outward accommodations, while the house of their God lay waste; so christians are no less to blame if they are unconcerned when they see the church, the spiritual house of God, in a decaying and ruinous condition. It is not then a time for them to regale themselves with the pleasures, and immerse themselves in the cares and amusements of the world; but they are then loudly called by God to consider and amend their ways. This is the argument which I would now endeavour to illustrate and inculcate; In pursuance of which design,

First, I shall shew that sometimes the church, the spiritual house of God, is in a wasting, decaying state among a professing people; and point out some evident tokens, from which we may judge when this is the case.

Secondly, Enquiry will then be made into the causes and occaions of such an unhappy state; after which,

THIRDLY, I shall endeavour to shew that when the house of God, or the true interest of his church is apparently decaying and sinking among a people, they ought not to give themselves up securely and unconcernedly to their worldly pursuits and enjoyments, but they should so consider their ways and state, as to be suitably affected, and seek and apply proper remedies, or means of redress.

FIRST. That the church, the spiritual house of God is liable to decays, and sometimes is actually laid waste, will not perhaps be doubted by any. Christ has indeed promised to take care of his church, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail. He will always, till his second coming, have witnesses to the truth, who shall hold up the light of the gospel in the world. But particular churches sometimes decay till they become extinct. The kingdom of heaven is taken from them, and, as a just punishment of their abuse of gospel privileges, the candlestick is overset and removed. When the living and sound members of churches are taken away, and the breaches are not repaired, or are filled up with unsound materials, the house of God will decay apace. When the godly cease, when the faithful fail, when they who are to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world are scarce to be found among nominal christians, it may be expected that corrupt principles and practices will encrease, and that what weak remains there may be of true religion, will wax cold and be ready to die. It is the presence of Christ in his churches, by the influences of his spirit, which preserves them from apostacy. These influences, as we learn from the warnings and facts recorded in the scriptures, are sometimes so withdrawn, or withheld, that visible churches have degenerated into synagogues of Satan. Infidelity, and gross antichristian corruptions of religion, have rooted out true christianity from those parts of the world where the appos-

tles preached and overwhelmed the churches which were planted and watered by them. These houses of God are now in ruins. And has there not been a great falling away in some, if not all of the protestant churches? Yea, have we not reason for serious apprehensions, that the house of God, with us, is going to decay, and that the noble vine which God planted in this land is degenerating into the plant of a strange vine? That we may form a right judgment of the state of religion, and the signs of the times as respecting ourselves, let us attend a little to this inquiry, viz.

When a people professing christianity, have reason to think that the house of God is decaying, or that true religion is in a low declining state with them?

Here it must be remembered that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. The true interest of his church does not consist in the outward prosperity of its members. Though we have reason to be thankful when the churches enjoy outward peace and liberty, and when the enemies are restrained from oppressing and making havock of them; yet the building up of this house of God has often prospered remarkably, when it has been violently battered by persecution. And on the contrary, it has often gone to decay as remarkably, when christians have enjoyed outward peace and prosperity. The favor of the world has often been more prejudicial to the true interests of religion, than open oppression. We are not to doubt in deed, but that those partial evils which are permitted to arise, will in the end be made subservient to the true interests of Christ's kingdom. Yet it is a sad omen to a people, and an awful token that their glory is departing from them, if true religion appears to be greatly declining among them. And this we must judge to be the case,

First. When churches are very sensibly dwindling, and there is but a small number who make a credible

profession of religion. Though no wise christian will desire to have churches filled up with such as give no sufficient evidence to a judgment of charity of their sincerity; yet it is a matter of great joy to all who have the interest of religion at heart, when many are added to the Lord, and his church, agreeably to the rule of the gospel. But when few appear disposed to profess their faith in Christ, and give themselves up to God by an open consent to the gospel covenant, it is a sad sign, that religion is in a low state among a people, and the house of God is wasting. So also,

Secondly. When corrupt and dangerous errors are taught and embraced, or at least favored by professors of religion. It is true, christians may not well understand, or be mistaken in some points, and those of considerable importance; and yet hold the head, and receive spiritual life and nourishment therefrom. But when the faith delivered to the saints is not maintained in its purity, when capital doctrines of the gospel are not regarded as of much importance, but perhaps are called in question, or even denied, when the minds of many appear to be leavened with dangerous errors, especially if such errors are not properly noticed and reproved, we shall have great reason to be alarmed at the peril of the times, lest the kingdom of God should be taken away from such a people.

Thirdly. This is also the case, when the ordinances which Christ has instituted for the edification of the church, are not duly observed. Some who would be accounted christians have a low opinion of the ordinances of Gospel worship, and are very slack, negligent, and carless in their observance of them; particularly of the christian Sabbath, the public worship of God; and more especially the Lord's Supper. If christians are not found walking orderly and dili-

gently in these ordinances of the Lord, it is a sign that both the power and the form of Godliness are sinking very low.

Fourthly When the awakening, converting, sanctifying, quickening and comforting influence of the gospel and spirit of Christ is not visible in its proper effects on the hearts and lives of those who attend on the means of grace, this is a great evidence that the house of God, or his church is decaying. Unless a special divine blessing attend gospel ordinances, the church will not be edified by them. Unless the Lord build the house, the builders will labor in vain. After Paul had planted, and Apollos watered, it was God who gave the increase. If the work of conversion be at a stand, and sinners appear to be rather blinded, and hardened under those means which should awaken, and lead them to repentance; and if christians do not find their graces exercised, quickened, and strengthened, and so their edification promoted in and by their outward attendance on ordinances, have we not reason to conclude that God is withdrawing his gracious presence from such a people? And however the forms of religion may be decently observed, yet the power of vital Godliness is at best, weak and cold, and ready to fail. I shall only add,

Fifthly. When professed christians walk disorderly, unsuitably to their heavenly calling, dishonoring their profession, by a barren, loose and unholy conversation, and gospel means are not used for their reformation, we may be sure that true religion is at a low ebb. If scandalous disorders are not seasonably and prudently corrected, they will be likely to increase to more ungodliness in a rapid progress. If the fruits of holiness and righteousness are not found in the lives of professors, but they walk according to the course, spirit and example of a world lying in wickedness, their making a profession of faith, and

attending punctually the externals of worship, will be no sufficient evidence that the spiritual house of God is not in a wasting ruinous, condition.

If these symptoms of danger should be found upon us, we have reason to be alarmed, and not delay to seek and apply proper remedies: In order to this, let us,

SECONDLY. Enquire a little into the causes or occasions of these evils. Whenever a professing people sink into such an unhappy dangerous state as has been described, the craft and the malice of the enemies of the church have doubtless a great influence in the matter. But these could not prevail, as they often do, were it not for the fault and neglect of christians; which gives their adversaries an advantage against them, and provokes God to forsake them, and withhold the gracious influences of his spirit, to reclaim them from their apostacy, and heal their backslidings.

First. The enemies of the church are many, powerful, crafty, malicious, and restless in their endeavors for its destruction. Christ rules in the midst of his enemies. And were it not for his protecting presence in his church, these enemies would make a prey of his little flock. But though they shall not prevail so as to demolish the house of God, which is built upon the rock of ages, yet the enemy is sometimes permitted to make havock. As a roaring lion, he sometimes threatens to devour the church by those persecutions which have wasted it; and sometimes the crafty old serpent winds himself into its bosom imperceptibly, and as he beguiled Eve thro' his subtility, so the minds of christians are corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ, and infected with the poison of dangerous errors. That he may carry on his mischievous devices, he knows how to transform himself into an angel of light; and his ministers also, though inwardly ravening wolves, or crafty foxes,

steal into Christ's fold in sheep's cloathing, making mischief wherever they come. The world also, by its evil maxims and examples ensnares many, who are easily enticed to walk in the broad, beaten way, following a multitude to do evil. To all this, we must add the perils which the church often suffers from those in its own bosom, who, instead of promoting good designs and essays for reformation, are a continual clog upon them. From these causes the doctrines, worship, disciplineand morals of christian societies are too often much corrupted. And unless the vices and exertions of our spiritual enemies be seasonably and earnestly opposed, the evils will make a swift progress to a total apostacy. But,

Secondly. These enemies could not prevail as they often have done, if christians by their own fault did not give them an advantage. The true interests of the church have received many a deep wound in the house of professed friends. By their imprudent neglects, their want of vigilance and zeal in counterworking the devices of their enemies, they have in effect co-operated with them, in defacing and shattering the house of God.

Among the chief causes of the decay of vital godliness, we may mention a want of due zeal, for the great doctrines of the gospel. Many christians appear to be but weakly established in their religious principles. Soundness in the faith seems to be regarded by too many, as a matter of no great importance. Gospel holiness is founded on gospel principles. These are the food with which the souls are nourished to eternal life. By these the divine life in the soul is maintained and cherished, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, who is *the Spirit of the Truth.* If men are not well grounded in the fundamentals of our holy religion, it cannot be expected that their temper and practice will be much influenced by them. Growing christians desire and relish the

sincere milk of the word. If our food be corrupted with unwholesome mixtures, it may be expected that our health and vigor will decline. If churches do not hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love, the house of God is not only defaced, but its foundations and pillars are weakened, and the breaches will be likely to become greater and more dangerous, unless they be speedily healed. The unity of the spirit ought indeed to be maintained among all christians who hold the main principles of christianity, however they may differ in other points. But we should not be so Catholic, as to bear any doctrines, or to hear without concern the great truths of our religion denied, or called in question, and dangerous errors maintained. Churches will not be likely to keep the faith pure and undefiled, unless they have the zeal to contend for it, against those who corrupt the word of God. They must not believe every spirit, but try them whether they be of God.

Another great cause of the decay of christian piety, is the neglect or abuse of gospel ordinances.—These are the outward and ordinary means of the building up of the church and preserving the form and power of religion. If the Lord's day, which ought to be kept holy, be profaned and mispent by idleness, by sinful, or unseasonable employments and amusements; if men forsake the assembling themselves for the public worship of God through sloath, careless indifference, or any insufficient reasons, if they do not give a serious and devout attention to the religious exercises, but suffer their minds to be occupied by vain, worldly and sinful thoughts, when they should be lifting up their hearts to God in prayer and praises, and hearing what he has to say to them in the word preached, considering the weight and importance of the truths of religion, mixing them with faith, and applying them to themselves for their edification. If we are chiefly attentive to the beauties

or defects in the composition, the language, or delivery of the discourses, rather than to wait on God for his blessing in the way of his ordinance; we cannot reasonably expect to be as trees planted by rivers of water, bringing forth their fruit in season. The good seed will not be likely to be fruitful in a soil so ill prepared for it. The abuse of ordinances tends, by the righteous judgment of God, to render men more indisposed, and hardened, against receiving edification from them.

The neglect or undue attendance of professors on the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, requires to be particularly mentioned among the causes of the decay of christian piety. How many, alas, carelesly neglect this holy ordinance, which if rightly used, is by the blessing of Christ, eminently conducive to the edification of the church? And are not many guilty of approaching thereto unworthily, which especially if securely indulged, is, I fear, of more dangerous consequence than many seem to be apprehensive.

This leads us to observe, that the neglect or abuse of the ordinances of discipline, for the removing of scandals which may arise in churches, is to be reckoned among the causes of a declining state of religion. If a church suffers its members to walk disorderly without reproving them, and bearing a faithful testimony against their miscarriages, disorder will be likely to spread, and become more malignant in consequence of such sinful indulgence. By neglecting to rebuke an offending brother, and to apply gospel means for his healing, they make themselves partakers with him. When they have so little concern for the honor of the christian profession, and for the souls of their brethren who have fallen to their wounding, it must greatly provoke Christ to withdraw his gracious presence from them. If church members do not consider and watch over one another to provoke

to love and good works, the love of many will wax cold. That churches may shine as lights in the world, they will sometimes need to have the snuffers of the sanctuary applied to them.

A neglect of the religious instruction and government of families is also to be reckoned among the chief causes of the decay of christian piety. Religious families are the nurseries of the church. In them the materials are chiefly formed and prepared, with which the house of God is built up. If christians were faithful and prudent in the religious instruction and government of their families, the churches would doubtless receive desirable and hopeful additions. But when family religion declines, growing apostacy will be the natural consequence. The rising generation will be likely to be more corrupt than the pre-preceeding and the ruins of the house of God become more dangerous and alarming. The religious education of children is too much neglected by many, who, we hope, are sincere christians. And how many by this neglect have laid a foundation for heart breaking sorrow to themselves, and misery to their children!

May it not also be mentioned among the causes of the low state of religion, that christians are no more earnest and persevering in their prayers to the God of all grace for a blessing on the means which are used for the building up of the church, and for the converting, sanctifying and quickening influences of his good spirit. The interests of the Redeemers kingdom should lie near our heart, and we should be much concerned to see the enemies of the church roaring among us, setting up their ensigns and trophies, making such unhappy progress in battering and undermining the house of God. The building up of the church is, I suppose, commonly an article in the prayers of christians; but are we not often too cold and slight in our supplications for so important

a blessing? Should we not be instant, and humbly importunate with God, and give him no rest, as the prophet speaks, till he arise and plead his own cause, rebuke and scatter his enemies, and suffer no weapon formed against Zion to prosper? This is a blessing for which he will be enquired of, by us.—But he hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. The rebuilding of the temple was accomplished in answer to the prayers of the pious Jews; and it is in answer to the prayers of the church that satan's kingdom is to be destroyed, and the kingdom of Christ built up and enlarged.

I shall only add, that when christians indulge themselves in such tempers, and such a conversation, as is contrary to the rules and spirit of the gospel, in spiritual sloth, carnal security, sensuality, worldly mindedness, pride, envying, uncharitable disaffection, and contentions, the power and influence of religion upon their hearts and lives will, while they remain in such unhappy frames, be likely to decay, more and more, and the baneful effects will become more visible, contagious and malignant. Those who are near and conversant with them, will catch infection as it were from their breath, and be corrupted by their example; and unless, such backslidings are speedily healed, the interest of true religion may be expected to decline in a rapid progression.

It may be asked, whether the particulars which have been mentioned, as causes of the decay of christian piety, are not rather instances of that evil whose causes are enquired for. I answer, though they are indeed instances of apostacy, yet they are also causes, disposing and tending to further and greater evils; so a breach made upon a house, causes it to decay more and faster. When churches begin to decline, and fall away from their first purity and love, their strength or vigor is enfeebled, and their enemies gain a great advantage to make further and more danger-

ous breaches, and break in upon them like a flood; and God is hereby justly provoked to suffer their enemies to prevail against them—And this leads us to observe,

Thirdly. When the house of God goes to decay, the hand of his holy providence is to be acknowledged in such a dispensation. 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' A visible decay of religion in any place, is a token of divine displeasure. It is always a just punishment on a people for their neglecting or abusing the privileges of the kingdom of heaven. God will not forsake us, unless we first forsake him. Though he is sovereign in the exercises of his mercy, yet he never visits a people in a way of judgment, in mere sovereignty. If He withdraws his gracious presence, and the influences of his spirit from them, it is because their iniquities have separated between them, and their God, and hid his face from them. Free grace is the source of all our blessings; but all the evils with which we are affected, originate with ourselves. If a people are deprived of the means of grace, or of a divine blessing with them, it is their *sin* which causes God to frown upon them.—We now proceed to the

THIRD Proposition, viz.—When the house of God, or the interest of his church and kingdom is visibly declining among a people, they ought not to give themselves up securely to their worldly pursuits and enjoyments, but they should so consider their ways and state, as to be suitably affected, and seek and apply proper remedies or means of redress.

While we live in this world, a competent portion of the comforts of this life is desirable; and it is not only lawful, but a duty for christians, according to their ability, to provide things honest in the sight of all men. And they may enjoy the comforts of their worldly conveniences, and use the world, provided

they do not abuse it. The fault reproved in the Jews, was not merely having houses for their use, but sitting themselves down at their ease, and without concern, in their elegant, ornamented seats, (for so the words in the original are explained by critics,) while they were little grieved at the ruinous state of the house of God. We may in lawful ways acquire, possess, and enjoy the outward blessings of providence; but our affections ought always to be set on things above. The kingdom of God and his righteousness should be first, and chiefly sought, and its interests preferred above our chief joy. And when true religion is low and decaying among a professing people, it is peculiarly improper for them to immerse themselves in worldly cares and amusements. They should be deeply affected with so sad and dangerous a state. Serious and awakened consideration of our state and ways, is a duty to which we are loudly called, when the days are evil.

In the *first place*, Let us consider how unfit it would be for a people professing a regard for religion to give themselves up securely to the cares and enjoyments of this world, when religion is evidently in a low, declining state among them. It is at all times very unbecoming a professor of christianity, to be of a worldly spirit, fondly indulging the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. But this is peculiarly unfit, when iniquity abounds, and true piety is visibly decaying. It shews a stupid insensibility of the evil and danger of such a state, and a disregard of the certain tokens of God's great displeasure. And it has a most direct tendency to prevent men's duly attending the proper means of recovering from their backslidings, or to render those means ineffectual to produce a reformation.

Let it then be considered, that whenever religion declines among a people, *sin increases and prevails* in equal proportion. And there is no evil so great as

the abounding of sin. The sorest afflictions in this world, are not so much to be dreaded. Sin is the procuring cause of all other evils, and while it reigns, is continually increasing in its malignity. Ought we not then to be affected with great sorrow and concern, when a deluge of irreligion and iniquity is flowing in upon us, threatening to swallow up every thing which is truly good. When the house of God is defaced, undermined, and apparently sinking, and his enemies, as it were, carrying all before them, ought not this to cool our ardor in pursuing, and abate our relish for enjoying the things of the world? Can we find a heart to solace ourselves in these things, when the cry of so much sin and guilt is loud against us, and God himself is incensed against us for our numberless provocations. The Psalmist was grieved, when he saw the transgressors. Rivers of waters ran down his eyes, because men kept not God's laws. And if we were of his spirit, we should not have a heart to be much pleased with any of our worldly possessions and enjoyments, when so bad a spectacle rises to our view on every side.

And as the sin of a backsliding people is very great, so it is certain that *God is greatly displeased with them*, and frowns awfully upon them. His withdrawing his sanctifying and quickening influence, and suffering their spiritual enemies to prevail to such a degree, as that a decay of vital religion becomes visible, is a terrible judgement; such a declining state is in itself very sinful, as has been said. It is also an evidence that their past sins have been very displeasing to God, since he has thereby been provoked to leave them in judgment to sink into such an unhappy, languishing condition; and the provocation will be aggravated, and the anger of God further enhanced, if they are so unaffected, unconcerned under such a frown, that they could be content to live as withdut God or religion, if they might have the good

things of this world richly to enjoy. Temporal judgments are not so much to be dreaded by us, as for God to withdraw the influences and restraints of his grace, and leave us to pine away in our sins, to become mere cumberers of the ground, fit only to be cut down and cast into the fire. When our God, our glory, seems to be about to forsake us, our hearts must be stupid and hard as the nether millstone, if the plain tokens and evidences hereof do not awaken us; our worldly accommodations one would think should give us little pleasure or satisfaction when we find the house of God, the interests of his kingdom decayed, and that he is greatly displeased with us, frowning, and actually inflicting his judgments upon, us; even such judgments as threaten to deprive us of these privileges which ought to be most dear to us.

Must it not be very displeasing to God, when his professing people manifest so *little concern for the honor of his holy name*, and the clearest and fullest revelation which he has made of his glorious and amiable perfections in the gospel. When the power of godliness decays so as not to appear in its proper effects among professors, the name of God is dishonored, and religion is exposed to the contempt of its open enemies. Can we then be easy and contented that this should continue to be the case with us? And will not a holy and jealous God, regard those with great displeasure, who are so bewitched with the idols of this world, as to slight his frowns, and be unconcerned for his honor?

Let it also be considered *of what little importance our worldly interests and enjoyments are*, compared with the interests of our immortal souls and everlasting state. What should it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? If our souls prosper, it is a matter of unspeakably greater joy, than the increase of corn and wine. A christian in a right frame, has the building up of the church

so much at heart, that he cannot but greatly rejoice while it goes on prosperously, whatever his outward circumstances may be; and in the greatest flow of prosperity he would be restless and uneasy, if he found true religion declining, wickedness and impiety gaining ground. He would be grieved at his heart, to see the souls of men in jeopardy, entangled in the snare of the devil, and led captive by him at his will.

When the house of God lies waste, when there is a prevailing decay of piety among a people, *their state is very dangerous.* Many seem not to be sufficiently sensible of this. We often hear the low state of religion spoken of with so much coldness and indifference, as shows that they are not alarmed at it. Apostacy is a growing evil; every degree prepares the way, and opens a wider breach for further and greater evils to rush in. Like a cancer or a gangrene, it will naturally spread, and become more dangerous. When professed christians lose their relish and zeal for religion, and sink into a cold, careless, slothful, carnal frame, and indulge themselves in tempers, and a conversation unbecoming the gospel, the inclinations of corrupt nature will gain strength, and their power and resolution to resist them will be weakened, the good spirit of grace, by whose help we mortify the deeds of the body, is quenched and grieved. By forsaking God, they provoke him to forsake them more and more, and leave them more under the power of a carnal mind, and more exposed to the temptations of Satan, and the world, and less under the merciful restraints of his providence, and influences of his spirit. We need not wonder if corrupt principles and practices should then creep in fast, and prevail among them, and the enemies of true religion gain ground, till the candlestick of the church may at length be overthrown, its light extinguished, and a synagogue of Satan built up on its ruins. The

church of Ephesus was warned that this would be the consequence of leaving their first love, unless they should remember whence they had fallen, and repent and do their first works. And Christ also threatens the lukewarm Laodiceans, that he would spue them out of his mouth, unless they should become zealous, and repent. These threatenings have been executed long since on these churches, and on many others, and they are recorded for a warning to us, and all the churches.

It may also be added, that if we are content to let the house of God lie waste, provided our own houses may be suffered to stand, we may justly fear *these will not stand very safely;* but the curse of God, and his wasting judgments may pursue and blast us in our temporal interests, as it happened to the Jews in our context, as a punishment for want of zeal for the house of God.

The gracious presence of God is in his church. This is the house or temple in which he dwells among us. If this goes to ruin among us, he will retire, and prepare him a habitation in another place. But wo to us, if God depart from us. For he will then avenge the quarrel of his broken covenant. If then the power of godliness appears to be much declining in our churches, and even the profession of it gradually failing, have we not reason to tremble for fear of Gods's judgments? Is such a state to be rested in? Is it not high time to awake out of our sleep? Shall we compose ourselves to rest in our private cabins, when the bottom on which we are embarked is in so much danger?

Such a state of carnal security in the pursuit and enjoyment of the things of the world, would have a direct and powerful tendency *to divert christians from giving a due attendance on the proper means, in order to the healing of their backslidings; and also to prevent the good effect of those means which may be used with*

them for this end. We ought at all times to attend diligently on the means of edification. And the neglect of them is doubtless a great cause of the spiritual decays of christians, as was before observed. But when religion appears to be declining, they who desire a revival thereof, should awake and double their diligence, that they may not only hold fast, and maintain, and strengthen the things which remain, but also recover the ground which had been lost. They should apply themselves in great earnest to the use of the means proper for this end. But this we shall never do, while the interests and enjoyments of this world lie so near our heart, that we are more concerned to be well accommodated for the present life, than to have true vital godliness maintained and expressed in its power by ourselves and others. We shall not seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, while our affections are set on things on the earth. And the means which may be used by others to promote a reformation, and a revival of religion, will not be likely to have the desired effect on those, whose minds and hearts are occupied in the the pursuit and enjoyment of earthly things, till the stream of their affections is turned out of that wrong channel.

Alas! how little do many of us shew forth the praises of him who calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. When our worldly interest suffers, we are tremblingly alive to feel it. But how little are we concerned at the declining state of the church? Surely, they, whose treasures and hearts cleave to the dust, do not confess by their actions, that they are strangers and pilgrims on earth.

If any think, I am warm upon the subject, I am so indeed; and would humbly ask, is there not a cause? When the state of our churches, and the aspects of providence are considered, is it not high time for those who think our religious interest of

importance, to be awakened to a consideration of the things of our peace? What is most to be feared, is, that no abiding impressions will be made on the minds of those who most need to have these things pressed and inculcated on them, with precept upon precept, and line upon line.

Let us now in the *Second place* attend with reverence to the admonition which speaketh to us from heaven. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.

The *ways* of man in scripture commonly signifies his conduct and course of life; it also signifies his state or condition whether prosperous or adverse, safe or perilous.

To *consider* our ways is to think of them with attention and deliberation. This is to be done in order to our forming a right judgment of our conduct, character, and state, and that we make suitable reflections, resolving to correct what has been amiss and supply what has been deficient. Without considering our ways we can neither proceed in the way wherein we should go, nor return to it when we have swerved from it. A great part of the errors of men are owing to want of consideration.

We ought at all times to consider our ways, and walk circumspectly not as fools but as wise. For it is of great importance to ourselves and others that the course of our lives be set, and conducted aright. Much careful attention is necessary that we mistake not the objects we are to aim at, or the means by which we are to seek for them. For there is a way which seemeth to be right, but the end there of is the ways of death. But when the days are evil and perilous, when religion and virtue are visibly decaying, we should consider our ways and state with peculiar concern, that effectual means may immediately be applied to remedy or check the growing evils: particularly,

Let us consider *what our ways have been*; whether we have done what we ought for the support and advancement of religion, and for the prevention and reformation of those things which are contrary to it, or whether we have been in any measure the blameable causes of the ruinous state of the house of God.—We should search our hearts, and try our ways, that we may be duly sensible of our own failings, and be humbled for them with that godly sorrow which shall work repentance and reformation. Has our conversation been as becomes those who are to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world? Have we been steady and engaged in the profession and practice of religion; diligent and punctual in attending the duties of worship, public and private, and having our conversation in the world agreeably to the rules of the gospel, in simplicity and godly sincerity? Have we walked in our house with a perfect heart; instructing, governing, and leading our families in the way they should go; resolving that we and our houses will serve the Lord? Have we done our duty for the propagation of christian knowledge, piety and virtue, and the suppression of ungodliness and wickedness in our proper sphere? Thus we should review our past temper and behaviour, penitently imploring forgiveness of whatever has been amiss, and grace to help in time of need. We should so think on our ways as to turn our feet into God's testimonies: making haste, and not delaying to keep his commandments.

And not only our past ways should be considered and reviewed by us, but also *the way and course of life in which we are now engaged;* whether we find reason to be satisfied that our present views, tempers, and pursuits are right. If we do not take pains to know ourselves, what manner of spirit we are of, our deceitful hearts, with the flatteries of friends, will be

apt to mislead our judgment. Are we now sincerely and resolutely engaged in the service of our God and Saviour, and in advancing his kingdom and righteousness in ourselves and others; giving up every interest and pursuit which interfere with this great object? Are we absolutely determined to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, that we may run with patience the race that is set before us; having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but reproving them, and bearing a faithful testimony against the evils which are in the world? Or are we following the multitude in the broad way, conforming to their evil examples, principles, and spirit, falling in with the prevailing degeneracy, or at best resting in the form of godliness without the power. My brethren, we must not only speak in favor of religion, and pray for a revival of it, but also stir up ourselves and others to be workers together with God in the building up of his church. Our love to religion must be not in word and tongue only, but in deed and in truth. When irreligious, antichristian principles, tempers and practices appear to be gaining ground, and the enemy is breaking in like a flood, every soldier of Christ, should repair to his standard. He who is not for him, at such a time, is against him. Let us with extraordinary exertion strive to stem the wild torrent of corruption, and kindle up to a holy flame, those sparks of heavenly fire which may lie buried in our hearts, like embers in the ashes ready to die. Let us consider our ways, whether we are now conducting ourselves in this manner. The repairing of the house of God is not likely to go on prosperously, till we are sensible that this matter belongs to us, and arise, come forward and give a helping hand.

We must therefore consider *what way or line of conduct is hereafter to be pursued by us.* And here

the admonition of Christ to the church of Ephesus, when they had left their first love, is equally proper for all other churches in a similar state. "Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent and do thy first works.' The causes of apostacy, some of which were mentioned under the second head, must be guarded against, and proper antidotes applied. Particularly, let us carefully guard against and counterwork the temptations of Satan, and this evil world, taking to ourselves the whole armour of God to withstand our spiritual enemies. Let us cherish a deep sense of the great importance of the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, and have our sentiments, temper, and manners, formed, as it were, in this divine mould; counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Let not the ordinances of gospel worship be neglected or carelessly attended. Let christians consider one another to provoke to love and good works, exhorting one another daily while it is called to day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Let great care be taken that a good foundation of sound doctrinal knowledge be early laid in the minds of the rising generation, and that they be instructed to give a good answer to every one that may ask a reason of the hope that is in them, and that the importance of an experimental, practical acquaintance with religion, be much inculcated upon them. Let christians strive together in their prayers for a blessing on the means of grace, that the kingdom of God and his righteousness may be gloriously advanced. And finally, if it be our desire to see the King of Saints ride forth triumphant on the word of truth, and the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand, let us cause our light to shine before men, not only in a profession of the faith delivered to the saints, but also in a conversation agreeable to such a profession, that men may see our good works, and glorify our Father

who is in heaven. But a more particular detail of rules for our future conduct to promote a revival of religion cannot now be given. And indeed, the best rules are of no advantage, unless they are reduced to practice.

Arise now, O Lord, and plead thine own cause. Let thine enemies be scattered, and let those who hate thee, flee before thy face. Save thy people, bless thine inheritance, feed them, and lift them up forever. And let every christian say—Amen.

*God's treating every man agreeable to his moral character, shown to be consistent, with his blessing the seed of the righteous, and cursing the seed of the wicked.**

A SERMON.

BY

SETH WILLISTON,

PASTOR OF A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN LISLE, STATE OF NEW-YORK.

EZEKIEL, xviii. 20.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

TO excuse ourselves, and throw the blame of our sin upon some other, has always been exceedingly natural to fallen man. Our apostate parents early set us this example. We have a natural affection

* *It may perhaps strike the reader, that the title prefixed to this sermon, embraces more than the text from which it is drawn. The author would just mention the reason of his making this text embrace so wide a field. He had held up in his public discourses, that there was a connexion in the covenant of grace, between the holy faithfulness of parents and the salvation of their children. This appeared to some of his hearers, inconsistent with God's treating every man according to his own character. What he had advanced upon the covenant connexion of parents and children, was thought by some, to perfectly clash with the chapter from which our text is selected. The author was particularly requested to take the verse, which stands as the foundation of the following discourse, and shew how it could be reconciled with what he had advanced about the connexion between parents and children. This gave rise to the following discourse, and the particular method in which the subject is treated.*

for our parents; but we love *ourselves* supremely. We had rather throw blame on other men, than on our parents; but we had rather throw blame on them, than take it to ourselves. We had rather make our sufferings and miseries the fruit of *their* sin, than our *own*.

The Jews, who were carried into the Babylonish captivity, manifested this disposition, in an eminent degree. They were a most ungodly generation, as appears by the description given of them in the propheeies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The Lord, by the mouth of his prophet Jeremiah, recounts to this evil generation, the sins of their fathers, and then adds, 'And ye have done worse than your fathers.' And by his prophet Ezekiel, he says concerning this same generation, 'They are impudent children, and stiff hearted and most rebellious.' Their extreme wickedness was represented to this prophet in the vision of the chambers of imagery. It is clear, that there never was a generation in Israel, which more justly deserved the wrath of God to be poured out upon them without mixture: Yet, as is common for the greatest sinners, they were for getting rid of all the blame. They were free to acknowledge, that their fathers had done wickedly; and they evidently ascribed all those dreadful judgments, which they suffered to the impiety of their fathers, who were now in the grave. Thus they made the ways of God unequal—unequal in punishing the innocent children for the sins of their wicked fathers. This is manifestly what they meant by using that proverb, which is taken notice of in the beginning of this chapter. 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' It is the object of this whole chapter to refute this false notion, to set the divine character and conduct in a fair and consistent point of light, and to convince that wicked people, that they were suffering for their own personal sins. Immediately after this proverb

is introduced, it is added with a solemn emphasis, 'As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.' They never had any just occasion to use this proverb; if they had, then the ways of God were once unequal: but this cannot be, for he changeth not.

In the fourth verse of this chapter, we have stated to us this important truth, which is a fundamental principle in every good government, especially in the perfect government of God, viz. *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.* The Lord had just said, 'Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so the soul of the son is mine. The consequence, which the Lord himself draws from this, is not, that therefore none shall die, but it is, that no one shall die except the soul that sinneth. One man is naturally as near to God, and no nearer than another. There is nothing to lead him to be more pleased with one than another, unless it be that his character is better; and there is nothing to induce him to punish one man, in distinction from another, unless his character be worse. It is true, that God dispenses grace upon one sinner, while another is left to his own hard heart; but in this he does not act as being partial and a respecter of persons; for he would, no doubt, leave the one he takes, and take the one he leaves, if the good of the universe required it. In forming characters, God acts as a wise and benevolent sovereign, extending grace to whom he will, and hardening whom he will; agreeable to the declaration of the apostle in the ninth chapter of Romans. But when characters are formed, God is obliged, as a holy Governor, to treat every creature according to his character, i. e. according to his own personal conduct and temper of heart. The sinner, whose heart is wholly selfish, must be a hateful creature, let who will be his father; while the saint, whose heart is warmed with love to God, and whose life is after the example of Christ, must be viewed as

amiable, though he might have had for a father one, who was a monster in wickedness. This truth is clearly illustrated, to the honor of the Holy One of Israel, in this chapter.

The matter is thus illustrated—First. A pious man is described from the fifth to the tenth verse. It is said of this man, 'He is just, he shall surely live.' Secondly. This man is then supposed to have a very wicked son, whose wickednes is described from the tenth to the fourteenth verse. Of him it is said, 'He shall surely die, his blood shall be upon him.' Then the matter is further illustrated, by supposing this wicked son, when he becomes a father, may have a child possessed of unfeigned piety. 'Now, lo, if he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doth not such like—he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.'

After these examples are stated to illustrate God's impartial justice, in treating every man according to his *own* and not his *father's* or his *son's* character, then the truth, which had been stated and illustrated, is once more reduced to a general proposition in the text: *The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the rigteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wiced shall be upon him.*

The text in connexion with the whole chapter from which it is taken, clearly teaches this important

DOCTRINE:

That it is a fixed principle in the government of God, to distribute rewards and punishments, according to the *personal character* of his creatures.

The case of Jesus Christ, our Mediator, is in some sense, an exception from this principle. He knew no sin, personally; and yet he was made sin, i. e. an offering for sin. He deserved no pain, but was wor-

thy of the blessedness of heaven, when he was sweating blood in the garden, and when he was dying upon the cross. The chistisement of our peace was *upon him*, and with *his* stripes *we* are healed. He was numbered with the transgressors; for he bore the sin of many. This was a new and wonderful scene in the divine government; yet not contradictory to the above principle. It was not understood, when the Father was bruising his Son and putting him to shame, that he designed to manifest any displeasure with the sinless character of his Son, but with the sinful and hell-deserving character of those, for whom he *voluntarily consented* to become a substitute. Since the stripes laid upon Christ were not designed to manifest the least displeasure towards him; and seeing it was his choice, that these stripes should be laid upon him, to answer infinitely important purposes in the kingdom of grace, there is nothing in this matter, which does by any means, destroy this general principle; that God will, on rendering rewards, treat every one according as his own work, shall be.

The truth of this principle, which is stated in the doctrine, and evidently contained in the text, may be proved. 1st. From scripture declarations. 2d. From God's actual treatment of moral agents. 3d. From the very nature of God; and 4th. It may be argued from the necessity of this principle, in order to the maintaining of divine government.

First. The principle laid down is capable of being proved by plain scripture declarations. To this point is that passage in Gen. 18. 25. 'That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; *and that the righteous should be as the wicked*, that be far from thee. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?' There is a passage in the 24th chapter of Deuteronomy, which is still more to the point. 'The fathers shall not be put

to death for the children; neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.' It is unequivocally declared, Rom. 2. 6. That God will render to every man according to his deeds. These passages perfectly accord with the text, in declaring that God will treat moral agents according to their own personal character.

SECONDLY. The same may be proved from God's actual treatment of his rational creatures. Some of the angels kept not their first estate of holiness, but left their own habitation; these were all immediately cast out of heaven, and are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day. There is not one of them left in Heaven: but the angels who remained obedient, all remain in the presence of God. While Adam kept his place, he dwelt in paradise and enjoyed the divine favor; but when he rebelled, he was cast out. All men, while they remain in their rebellion, remain under the wrath of God; but when they return unto God, he returns unto them. This world is not now a place of exact distribution of rewards and punishments; yet God has often so conducted the kingdom of providence, as to clearly show forth this truth, 'The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him,' i. e. the righteous are rewarded and the wicked punished. The wicked children of godly parents have met with a dreadful overthrow, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron; Amnon and Absolom, the sons of David; the sons of Eli, and others: and the pious children of wicked parents, have met with divine approbation, as Abijah, the son of wicked Jeroboam, and Josiah, the son of impious Amon. But however uneaqually rewards and punishments may now be distributed, we must remember, that no one is punished more than his iniquities deserve, and there

is a day coming, when every thing which now appears disordered, will be set pefectly right. The judge of all the earth will gather all nations before him, and divide them all into two companies. This separation will be made exactly according to their personal character. There will not be one rightoous soul found upon the left hand; nor one wicked, unholy creature on the right. God's actual treatment of moral agents at the day of judgment, and thenceforward through eternity, will make our text appear most strictly true. The *holy angels* will all be welcomed to *Heaven*, as their eternal abode; the *wicked angels*, or devils, will all be confined to *hell*. The saints, i. e. the holy ones, will be received to Heaven, let them be whose children they will. These, though once defiled with sin and fit for destruction, having now obtained redemption through the blood of the cross, are prepared unto glory. By faith they are clothed with the all-perfect righteousness of the Son of God. While on earth, in a state of probation, they obtained through grace, a holy character, and were attempered to the heavenly world. Heaven is their purchased inheritance; the better country which they desired while tabernacling in the flesh. All such will, without a single exception, be raised to Heaven. And Oh, what a glorious and united society they will form! However different in other respects, they will all be agreed in supreme love to God. In Heaven there will be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ will be all, in all. It will be no matter where they were born, or of whom, if they are only born from above. This makes them all meet for the Heavenly inheritance. What if they were some of them allied to wicked, prayerless families on earth, they were called out from their kindred, by the distinguishing grace of God. They have the same holy father, in a spiritual sense, as the children of the

most pious parents. Their wicked parentage is forgotten in Heaven. Christ will not upbraid them with it, since they did not follow the evil example of their parents; but forsook all to follow him. They, personally, are holy. This will make them forever lovely in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of all his holy family.

On the other hand, all the wicked, at the day of judgment, will be turned into hell. If they had ever so pious a parentage, this will do nothing towards keeping them from misery, while their hearts are unrenewed. It is not being born of blood, though ever so noble, or venerable, but the being born of God, which prepares for Heaven. The piety of parents will do nothing towards procuring the wicked an admission into Heaven; since it does nothing towards making them appear lovely in the sight of the Searcher of hearts. It rather tends to set off their impiety in a more dreadful point of light. It will be in vain for those, whose hearts are estranged from God, to plead, 'We have Abraham to our father.' If they plead this, they may be called upon to show in their lives the works of Abraham. The wicked, let them come out of ever so good families, or churches, are all fitted for destruction. They are attempered to such a state and place as hell. And this will undoubtedly be their portion for ever and ever. Thus God gives evidence of his different treatment of the two different characters which exist among his creatures, that he is influenced by no partial motives, but always judges righteous judgment.

THIRDLY. If God did not reward the good and punish the wicked according to their personal character, we should have no evidence that he was perfectly holy; that he was always the friend of holiness and the enemy of sin. If he ever approved of sin, or frowned upon holiness, he would ruin his character, as a holy, sin-hating God. If sin were any less odi-

ous, because it existed in the heart of David's son,' than though it existed in the son of Saul, then it is not *sin* which the Lord hates. If holiness were any less lovely to him, when it appeared in the heart of Abijah, the child of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, than when it appeared in the heart of Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah, those dear friends of God, then it will follow, that it is not *holiness*, but something else which he loves. And if this be the case, we have no evidence, that Jehovah is, as he is often stiled, 'the Holy One of Israel.' From the holiness of the Deity, we might safely infer, that he would distribute rewards and punishments according to personal character. If holiness be the very thing which God loves, then the same degree of holy affection will appear equally lovely, let it be discovered where it will. If it were possible that holy affection could spring up in the heart of the devil, God would love it; but it is acknowledged, that he could not reward it, unless the devil could be brought into union with the Mediator: because the law has no rewards for any thing short of perfect obedience. But the idea which we wish to make plain, is this, that holiness, being a disposition to embrace the glory of God, and the best good of his family, is in itself considered, an amiable, even the most amiable quality, which a moral agent can possess, and is that which the Holy one of Israel cannot but love, whenever he discovers it. On the other hand, sin, which is a disposition to prefer one's self above God and all his kingdom, is a hateful disposition, let who will possess it; therefore, God and all the friends of the universe must loath such a frame of heart. If the Lord be a God of truth, then we rest satisfied that he will treat his creatures so, as to express the real feelings of his heart, since he is perfectly independent, and can be laid under no restraint. This will lead me in the

Fourth Place, to prove, that it is a fixed principle in the government of God, to distribute rewards

and punishments according to the personal character of his creatures, from the absolute *necessity* of this principle, in order to the maintenance of divine government. It becomes the Most High, not only to discern between the precious and the vile, as a moral Agent; but actually to treat characters according to truth, as he is the moral Governor of the world. It becomes him, to take the most watchful care of the interests of his extensive and eternal kingdom. This will lead him to manifest his approbation of the righteous, who are promoting the perfection and glory of his kingdom. This will lead him to frown on all the incorrigible enemies of his government. It becomes him to take the most particular care, that there be no innocent creature condemned, and also, that there be not a single guilty one cleared. If this principle should once be departed from, the basis which supports divine government would be removed, and the throne of God would shake, so that nothing could again give it stability. If God should once, a single once, appear the friend of sin, and the enemy of holiness, his character and government would be so effectually ruined, that nothing could retrieve them. No wonder, therefore, that Abraham said, 'That be far from thee, that the righteous should be as the wicked; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' And God declares to Moses, that he will by no means clear the guilty. It being known that this is an established principle in the government of God, to treat every man according as *his* work shall be, and not according to the work of his father, or child, it is calculated to make us stand in awe, and not sin; it is calculated to make us feel the necessity of our engaging in the great business of religion, each one for *himself*. 'For we must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that *every one* may receive the things done in his body, according to that *he* hath done, whether it be good or bad.'

Thus far, brethren, you see the character of God, in his treatment of the righteous and the wicked, shines forth with resplendent brightness. If providence permit, we shall endeavor in another discourse, to remove out of the way a difficulty, which arises in the minds of some to cloud this brightness. In the mean time, let us attend to an inference or two, suggested by this part of our subject.

First. We infer the absolute necessity of regeneration. The human character is, by nature, totally bad. In us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, therefore they who are in the flesh cannot please God. God cannot, consistently with his holiness, reward *a bad character*, though he may, through grace, reward *a very ill deserving creature.* It is a fixed principle both under the covenant of works and of grace, to reward every man *according* to his works. God will not on any plan, pardon, justify and receive to glory those whose hearts remain at enmity with him. Except we are born again, i. e. become possessed of an entirely new character, we cannot see the kingdom of God. A profession of religion, and a visible standing in the church of Christ, will not secure to us a place in the kingdom of glory, because this may be without the least alteration in our character. We may say Lord, Lord, and yet not do the things which he commands: but he that is born of God doth not commit sin, that is, if his heart is changed, his life will be also. Let us lay it to heart, that as certainly as God is holy, he will not bestow the rewards of eternity on any but new *creatures.*— The change must be radical; old things must pass away, behold all things must become new. No change in the life, which does not flow from a real change of the heart, will be of any avail. A selfish man, with a reformed life, is still a bad man in the sight of HIM, who seeth things as they are. As judgment is to

pass on men at the great day, according to their deeds done in the body, i. e. their characters formed in this world, and as men are afterwards to remain filthy or holy, as they shall then be found, it will follow, that totally depraved creatures must be born again in this world, or never see heaven.

Secondly. If the character of God, and the principles of his government have been rightly stated in the preceding discourse, then Christ is the only hope of our fallen world. We are all completely depraved. Without Christ crucified, there would not be one good character among our whole species. Of course, without Christ, none could have been rewarded with eternal life. It is through the infinite attonement made by the son of God, and at his request, that the Holy Spirit is given to alter the character of sinners, and cause them to become saints. This new formed character is preserved and perfected in Christ Jesus; and when it is rewarded with eternal life, it is with a reward, not of debt, but of grace, through the divine attonement. The saints, even when they shall be received up to glory, will be, in themselves considered, ill-deserving, for they have broken that holy law, which threatened eternal punishment against the least transgression. An eternity of future obedience will not satisfy for one past act of disobedience; therefore, the reward of sinners, redeemed from iniquity, must *eternally* be a reward not of debt, but of grace: And this reward of grace can be consistently bestowed, in no other way, but through the meritorious death and prevalent intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is certain, that in rewarding the saints, the judge will manifest his approbation of that character, which through grace, they acquired in this world, for he will say to each, when he bestows the rewards of eternity upon him. 'Well done good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I

will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' But the kingdom of heaven is something infinitely better than the best saint deserves. He really deserves his portion in hell; but he is fitted for heaven, and there he will assuredly dwell, since the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. Through Christ, God can bestow a reward on the *ill-deserving*, but not upon the *unholy*. In bestowing rewards, God will invariably treat men according to their *personal character*, but not always according to their *personal desert*. And it is wholly owing to our union with Christ, that we are not all treated according to our ill-desert.

Thirdly. In the light of this subject, we learn the true meaning of the declaration—'God is no respecter of persons.' It undoubtedly means, that in distributing rewards and punishments, God treats men according to what they are, and not according to what they are not. Of a truth, said Peter, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. They who fear God, and work righteousness are accepted with him, let them be Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, bond or free, male or female, the children of pious or impious parents; it makes no difference; it is their *character* which the Holy One of Israel regards. He does not despise the poor because he is poor; nor does he despise the slave any more than his master. If the slave fears God, he will be accepted, and the master if he does not, will be condemned. External condition has no influence upon the Judge of all the earth. He always judges righteous judgment. He neither respects the person of the rich, nor of the poor. We shall not be rewarded or punished, according to the character of our parents, or of our children, but exactly according to our own. 'The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked

shall be upon him. What can be more impartial than such conduct. ? In view of this we can see, that of a truth God is no respecter of persons.

We cannot dismiss this part of our subject, without remarking upon a very common abuse of the declaration, 'God is no respecter of persons.' This passage has been abundantly urged to disprove the sovereign dispensation of divine grace. But this is an entire misapplication of this scripture. Take a view of the place were it occurs in the 10th chapter of Acts. Peter says, I perceive, that God is no respecter of persons; because that in every nation, he who feareth him is accepted. He did not say, I perceive God is not a respecter of persons, because he hath bestowed no more grace on Cornelius, than on other Gentiles. This he certainly had done, else Cornelius would have been no better than other Gentiles: for naturally there is no difference; and it is by the grace of God, that the saints have become saints. But Peter learned the impartiality of the Divine being, from finding that he was pleased with and accepted all the righteous, let them belong to what nation they would. In bestowing regenerating grace on unholy creatures, God has no revealed rule by which he is governed. Concerning this, he says, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.—Therefore, it is impossible for us to tell from any thing which we discover in sinners beforehand, who will receive this grace. But *bestowing rewards* is a different thing from *bestowing grace*. By knowing the character, we can know before hand whether a blessing or a curse awaits him: for God will reward every one according as his work shall be. Grace is employed in forming men's characters anew, and impartiality, or judging without respect of persons, is an equal or just treatment of characters, which are already formed. From the text which we have been considering, we see that it is a fixed and eternal prin-

ciple with the Supreme Ruler, to treat every creature in the universe according to his own personal character. God is a Sovereign, a Holy and wise Sovereign in dispensing grace, but this does not infringe at all upon his impartiality. There is a constellation of glorious attributes in the Godhead. They are all harmonious. God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. Let us become godly, and we shall discover great beauty in the divine character. Even those things, which had been most disgustful, become precious to such as are taught by the spirit.

Fourthly. Learn from this subject how much it concerns every one to see to it, that he has religion. Every man must give account of *himself* to God. Our living in a christian land will not save us; nor will our living in a christian family save us. We may be closely united with christians, even so as to lie in their bosom; yet if we are not *ourselves* united to Christ, we shall be perfectly unsafe, when we stand before that Judge, who saith, 'The soul that sinneth, *it* shall *die*.'

It is an important question for each one to put to himself, Am I a christian? Am I possessed of the spirit of Christ? Do I walk in him, and do I trust in him for salvation? '*He* that believeth shall be saved, and *he* that believeth not shall be damned.'

A SERMON,

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EZEKIEL, xviii. 20.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

IN the preceeding discourse, the text, in connexion with the whole chapter, was explained, and this was the doctrine, which appeared to rise out of it; viz. That it is a fixed principle in the government of God, to distribute rewards and punishments according to the personal characters of his creatures.

The justice of this procedure commends itself to every man's understanding. If this be uniformly God's manner of dealing, then we can all see, that God is light, and that in him, there is no darkness at all. But in the view of some, this bright light is darkened by the declaration, which the Lord makes in the second commandment; 'For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.' This passage seems to connect with the evil character of the parent, a curse on his children; and on the other hand, there is a blessing for the seed of the righteous. I shall not attempt to explain away this plain meaning of the passage, on which the ob-

jection is founded; but am willing to acknowledge, that there are very many passages in the bible, which most clearly express this connexion between parents and their children, both as it respects the friends and the enemies of Christ. I am also willing to own, that I have publicly taught, that God's covenant with Abraham (which has now come on the Gentiles) in which he engaged to be a God to him, and his seed after him in their generations, should be understood to mean, that the Lord will be a God to *the children* of believers, in the same sense, that he is *their* God, provided they bring up their children in covenant faithfulness. It has been asked, how can this be reconciled with the 18th chapter of Ezekiel, and espepecially with the verse, which has been chosen for our text? How can it be true, that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son; and yet the seed of the righteous be blessed, and the seed of the wicked be cut off, as it is declared it shall be in the 37th Psalm? Let us candidly and prayerfully attend to a solution of this difficulty.

Although it be invariably true, that the soul that sinneth, it shall die, and that one shall not bear the iniquity of another: Yet one man may be the means or intsrument of making another a sinner; or of causing him to continue to be such; and in this way he may bring about his destruction. In this way, 'one sinner destroyeth much good.' How often it is said of Jereboam the son of Nebat, that he sinned *and made Israel to sin.* By means of Jereboam, the people of Israel departed from the Lord and went after idols. According to the scriptural representation, he was the cause of their sin and destruction; yet they were not destroyed for *his sin*, but for *their own.* He *led* them astray, but they *followed;* else they had not been charged with forsaking the Lord. Satan, the prince of the devils, probably brought about the

revolt of all the other angels who fell; yet they were, each one of them cast out of heaven for his own sin. Satan beguiled Eve, and she tempted her husband; yet each one was driven out from the presence of the Lord for his own sin.

This matter may be further illustrated by the connexion between Adam and his posterity. If our first parents had kept covenant with God, we should all have been benefitted by *their* obedience, and yet rewarded according to the cleanness of *our own* hands. We could not have enjoyed the divine favor without personal holiness; but *their* perseverance in holiness would, according to covenant, have insured *ours*. By the fall, they broke covenant with God for themselves and for their posterity. 'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.' By Adam's disobedience we have become sinners; yet we are not punished for his sin, but for our own. But you will say, why does not the son bear the iniquity of his father; why do we not bear the iniquity of Adam? Sin entered the world by one man, and death by sin, and death passes upon all; for all are now become sinners, as much as if every one had stood in Adam's place, and fell for himself. Let us try to familiarize this subject. Solomon in 1 Kings 8. 38. calls sin a plague of the heart. It is exceedingly contagious. Adam has spread it through his whole race. He begat a son in his own sinful likeness, and this likeness has been transmitted down from father to son. David says, he was conceived in sin. If a child takes the plague of his parent, he does not die with his parent's disease, but with his own. He dies with a disease like to his parent's, and a disease which he caught from his parent; but still it is his own personal disease, which kills him. Let us keep in view, that our plague is *sin*, i. e. voluntary opposition to the most High God, then our disease will not appear innocent. It is just in God to let us die, even eternal-

ly, with such a disease as this, let us take it where we may. And here we can see how wrong the proverb was, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' They meant, our fathers sinned and we have to suffer for it, though we are upright. The truth was, they both ate sour grapes, both they and their fathers. It would be wrong for children to suffer with their sinful parents, if they did not partake with them in their sin. It would be inconsistent with impartial justice for God to make us bear the *misery* of the fall, if we had not also received the *rebellious spirit* of it. And it was right for God to connect with Adam's apostacy the loss of holiness in all his posterity.

If there be any thing difficult in the divine conduct in this matter, it is in so ordaining, that Adam should communicate his sinful nature to his children: for surely we cannot say, that it is any more unjust to punish children when they are wicked, than to punish their wicked parents. But where is there any injustice in this divine appointment, that every thing should produce its like? God is under no obligation, unless it be by express covenant, to preserve any of his creatures in a state of holiness; but he is under a natural obligation, to render those happy, who remain holy. If God had been under a natural obligation, to preserve the holiness of his creatures, the fall of angels and of man would have been impossible. Their fall therefore proves, that God is under no such obligation to his creatures. In case our first parents had remained obedient, would God have been under any obligation in point of justice, separate from an express covenant engagement, to have brought all their children into the world in a state of holiness? Is it not the natural prerogative of a Creator, to make such creatures as he pleases, if he does but treat each creature according to its nature and character. If it had been so, that holy Adam could have had unholy

children, I cannot see that there would be any injustice in their being punished, i. e. treated according to their character. Whether evil characters are formed by a divine efficiency, or a divine withdrawment, does not affect the subject before us. Whether it be one way, or the other, it makes no difference, when the character is formed. If God has a natural right to withdraw his special influence from holy creatures, and if the withdrawing will issue in their becoming sinful; then God has a natural right to form, and suffer to be formed just such characters, as will be for his glory. The forming of characters is not a thing which is to be examined in the light of justice, though it may suitably be tried in the court of wisdom; but the rewarding of characters already formed, is cognizable in the court where justice presides. There might have been a want of wisdom displayed in ordaining it so, that the first pair remaining obedient, should have had a sinful and miserable progeny, or that becoming disobedient, they should have one holy and happy; but separate from an express covenant, I cannot see, that either they, or their children could have complained of injustice: For, in the case supposed, God would treat every man according to his own work. If we do not grant that this prerogative, to form characters according to his own pleasure, belongs to the great Creator, it will be difficult to reconcile with justice the original depravity of all the sons and daughters of Adam. All that are born of woman, the man Christ Jesus excepted, begin their existence in a state of total depravity. We ought to feel blame-worthy, because *we* are *sinful*, even without taking into view that we, being in the loins of our first father, were once in a better state.

We have been more particular in speaking upon the first covenant, because it is known, that some have thought the doctrine of original sin, coming as

a fruit of the apostacy of our first parents, is inconsistent with what is said in the prophecy of Ezekiel, about the child's not bearing his father's sin. I have also supposed, that if the covenant with Adam for himself and his posterity were to be properly understood, the covenant with Abraham for himself and his seed, and with other believers and their seed, would be greatly elucidated. Adam's covenant was a federal covenant, and so is Abraham's. The covenant with Adam was *virtually* this. Walk before me and be thou perfect, and I will be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is the tenor and *words* of the covenant with Abraham. Both covenants lay up good for the seed, upon conditions to be performed by their parents; yet in neither, could the seed enjoy the favor of God, without personal holiness. Had Adam kept covenant, we have seen that the consequence would have been, his children would have been perfect. And of Abraham it is said by the Most High, 'I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and *they* shall keep the way of the Lord.' There are two points of difference in these covenants which now occur to mind. Adam's covenant not being ordained in the hands of a Mediator, proffered no good to himself or to his children on any condition short of perfect obedience; but in the covenant made with Abraham, God promises great good to *sinners*, who repent and believe on his Son Jesus Christ. In the first covenant, Adam could not enjoy the divine favor *himself*, without doing that, which would ensure the happiness of his *children*; but in the covenant of grace, *every* true believer will be saved, but it is not *every* true believer, whose children will be saved with him. Though there are these dissimilarities; yet the covenants operate on the same general principle, of shaping the character of the child according to that of the parent. It is only in view of the

character of the child being shaped, by the character of the father, that the conduct of the father fixes the destiny of his child. Abraham's children could no more have the Lord for their God, without faith and obedience than any other children. And here we see what false notions the Pharisaic Jews had of this covenant, in the time of John and of Christ. They say, "We have Abraham to our father." They intended to cover over all their impiety with the mantle of Abraham's covenant. Christ tells them, 'If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.' Their being destitute of Abraham's faith and works made it unsuitable, that they should plead an interest in the promises made to him and his seed.

It would sully the justice and purity of the Supreme Being, if he suffered pious parents to take their wicked unconverted children to heaven. Pious parents, in the exercise of unfeigned love to God, would not wish it. But such parents may have great desires for the conversion of their children: They may long to have them saved, in such a way as to *glorify*, as well as *enjoy* God. And I do not see why God may not, without tarnishing his glory, or contradicting his most solemn declarations in the text and context, condescend to promise believers, whom he calls his jewels, his lambs, his hidden ones, that he will gratify them in these holy longings after the souls of their dear children. And be assured, christian parents, that there are none but *holy* longings, and *holy* yearnings over your children, to which God has ever deigned to make a promise. Graceless parents have selfish desires, that their children may not be sent to hell, but that they may be received to happiness when they die. Such parents, however, do not have earnest desires that their children may serve, please and glorify the blessed God, to all eternity. But the friends of God will desire, that their children may be saved to the praise of the glory of grace.—

When the God of Abraham was manifest in the flesh and dwelt among men, he received into his arms and blessed all the little ones, which his pious friends brought to him for this purpose. Why is it not as consistent, that he should leave a standing promise with his church, that he will in all generations, bless all their children, which shall be presented to him in the arms of faith? To excite the faith of parents, to rouse up all their attention, and make them wrestlers in prayer, and to engage them in persevering faithfully in the holy education of their children, why may not he make a covenant, promising on his part, that he will add his blessing to their holy endeavors to disciple their children and bring them under the yoke of Christ? Why may he not make a covenant, to be a God unto them, and also to *their seed after them*, and make parental faithfulness the condition of claiming the promise for the seed? Why may he not to strengthen their faith in *his promise*, and also to seal *their engagements* concerning these precious immortal souls, command some token to be placed upon the children, to seal the compact? Did not the administering of the seal of circumcision to the children of Abraham, and of other believers, imply some good promised to them for these sealed children? Was it not so understood by the ancient church, and was it not so understood by the apostle, when he declared, that the Jews had much advantage, and circumcision much profit every way? And has not the administering of baptism to the infants of believers in Christ been almost universally considered by the christian church, as a token of some blessings contained in the covenant of grace for our little ones?* We have no

* *This discourse takes infant baptism for granted, as the objectors have no controversy with the writer on this account. They agree with him in believing in the baptism of infants; but they think he makes it mean* too much.

idea, that circumcision, or baptism, confers the blessings on the child; but is it not a token, or seal of some blessing to be communicated to that child, which is truly dedicated to God, and trained up in his fear? God cannot, consistently with his holiness, receive children to heaven, merely because they are baptized, but why may he not promise the parent, who truly takes hold of his covenant, and, committing his infant into the hands of Christ, has him baptized with water—why may he not promise, that his child shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost? This would not be saving a wicked child for the sake of the goodness of his parent; but it would be changing a wicked child into a good one, and so rendering him meet for heaven, and this in a way of covenant faithfulness to his believing parent. Why may not the Lord promise such a blessing as this, as well as a fruitful field, increase of cattle and flocks and full stores, as an expression of his love to, and delight in his obedient people? This is expressly mentioned among the other blessings promised to the obedient in the 28th chapter of Deut. 'Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body.' But Solomon says 'A foolish (i. e. a graceless) son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.' From this we learn, that children, to become a blessing, must become pious. God's promise to bless the fruit of the body must then include the blessing of grace. In the 103d Psalm, it is declared, 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant.' Does not this put the children of godly, covenant-keeping parents in a fairer situation for a blessing, than the children of those not in covenant? It is said of the saints, that they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. This is never said of the offspring of the wicked If the children

of the wicked are blessed, it is not a *covenant* blessing: Hence the force of this exhortation, Deut. 30. 19. "Choose life, that both thou and *thy seed* may live." There is a threatening in the 4th chapter of Hos. which is the counterpart of this promise; 'Seeing *thou* hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy *children*.'

It is very evident, from what has actually taken place, that parents, both good and bad, are often made to give a moral complexion to the character of their children. This is evident, not only in the case of Adam and Abraham, of whom we have spoken already, but the same truth is displayed in the case of Cain and Seth, two sons of Adam, and in the case of Esau and Jacob, the two sons of Isaac, who gave complexion to their descendants for many successive generations. Ham, one of the sons of Noah, brought a reproach upon his posterity, which is not wiped off to the present day. The curse pronounced upon Amalek Exod. 17. 16. throws light on this subject; 'Because the Lord hath sworn, that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.' But why would the Lord have war with Amalek from generation to generation? Because this generation, which was now upon the stage, had laid wait for Israel in the way when he came up from Egypt. This generation gave character to all the succeeding generations, and the Lord had war with them till their name was blotted out from under heaven; and all this was particularly designed, to manifest the divine displeasure against those, who laid wait for Israel in the wilderness.

The truth now under consideration is strikingly illustrated and proved, by the present state of the Jewish nation. The Jews of the present generation feel the weight of that imprecation, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' They are punished for their own sins. Each generation follows the steps of the

one which has gone before—approves its sayings and crucifies the Son of God afresh. Here is a clear and actual illustration of that which has been so difficult to many, viz. God's visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. That these unbelieving Jews do not go to hell for their father's sins, will be seen by and by, when the present, or some succeeding generation shall turn unto the Lord. As soon as this takes place, the curse will be taken off, and the Jews, which have been broken off, will be graffed again into their own olive tree, and will, with us, partake of all the root and fatness of the olive; Rom. 11. As soon as the current of iniquity ceases to flow, God will cease to visit the iniquity of the father's upon the children, whether it be in the fourth, third, second, or even first generation: Therefore, as soon as the Jews shall return unto him from whom they have so long revolted, not only the Gentile church will open her bosom joyfully to receive them (for to her it will be like life from the dead;) but the Saviour himself will, with all readiness, embrace them and give them as good a place in his family, as if their father's had not crucified him. This will show plainly, that it is their own and not their father's sin, which now causes the separation between them and Christ. Yet it is most manifest, that it is a *judicial* blindness and hardness of heart, which has happened to Israel. God is evidently manifesting his infinite displeasure against the murderers of Christ, by suffering *their* posterity, for such a course of generations, to continue in unbelief, and to be scattered around the world, as a hiss, a proverb and a bye-word. In the latter day glory, when the people shall turn to the Lord, they shall prove his faithfulness to his promises, as they now prove his severity in executing his threatenings. It will then be exemplified, by the uninterrupted descent of the blessing, as it is now by the descent of the curse. By comparing Isa. 59. 20, 21. with Rom.

11. 26, 27, it appears that the prophet is speaking of the conversion of the Jews at the Millennium. At that blessed period, this will be true: 'As for me, this is my covenant with them saith the Lord: My Spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.' A careful attention to this scripture, will reflect great light upon the covenant, which God made with Abraham, which indeed is the gracious olive in which believing gentiles now flourish, and into which the returning Jews will be re-engraffed. In the Millennium, and not till then, the blessings of this covenant will be realized in their full extent. The covenant, through the unfaithfulness of parents, and the consequent disobedience of children, has run out of some branches of families, in which it has once had place. The covenant was in the family of Abraham, but its blessings did not descend to the generations of Ishmael's posterity; nor to those proceeding from the sons of Keturah. This was the case of Esau and his posterity, though he was the son of a covenant father. After a while, ten of the sons of Israel with their generations were broken off from the church; and soon after our Saviour's advent, the other two tribes, a few excepted, were broken off. Thus, the covenant kept departing out of the mouth of the seed, and the seed's seed; but in the good days which are coming, it will be directly the reverse; then it will not depart out of their mouth, i. e. they will be real and not hypocritical professors; it will not depart out of the mouth of their seed; which is as much as to say, their children shall all be taught of God; it will not depart out of the mouth of their seed's seed, thenceforth forever: This is a declaration, that their children's children will be pious, and that this order of things will continue for a long time, if not to the

very end of the world. And let it be noticed, that all this good is communicated by virtue of God's covenant; 'This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord.' Now, there will be no new covenant made with the church in the Millennium. It will seem to be new, by being more strictly kept, and by its blessings being much more fully realized: But the same covenant has existed all along, and it is wholly our fault, that we do not now so keep it, as not only to prevent it from departing out of our mouth, but also out of the mouth of our seed.

In the Millennium, when the blessings shall descend so uninterruptedly, from generation to generation, the children of the pious will not be saved without personal piety. Godly parents will not then take their ungodly children to heaven; but godly parents will then be enabled to travail again in birth for their children, until Christ be formed in their souls. The faithfulness of these holy parents will issue in the *salvation* of their children, because it will issue in the *holiness* of their children; and this altogether through the mercy of God. I say altogether through the *mercy* of God; for it is not supposed, that parents, by any means, merit such infinite and eternal blessings for their children. They do not *merit* their own salvation; much less can they merit any thing for others. It is all free, unmeritted mercy, that God has ever promised any blessings to parents for their children; especially that he should say, I will be a *God* to your seed after you. It is all of mercy that God has established any connexion between a pious education, and the piety of children; that he has said, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, *and when he is old he will not depart from it.*' After this merciful establishment, it is all of mercy, if parents are enabled to train their children up in the way they should go. But what we maintain is this, that if they

are enabled to be faithful to their children (which is a possible case) God is under obligation, by his own gracious promise, to bless the children, and keep them from departing from the good way, in which they are trained up. I know him, said the God of Abraham, that *he* will command his children and household after him, and *they* shall keep the way of the Lord. Is this making parents the saviours of their children, in any way, which derogates from the honor of the divine Saviour? It is only making them the instrumental, and not the meritorious or efficient cause of good to their children. It also supposes that, as instruments, they derive all their sufficiency from Christ. In this sense, the scripture represents ministers as saving their hearers. Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine, said an aged apostle to a young minister, that thou mayest *save* thyself and them who hear thee. But, said the same apostle, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. What is here spoken of the perfect dependence of ministers is wholly applicable to the case of parents; 'the excellency of the power is of God and not of them. I beg that I may not be misunderstood, or misrepresented in this important point. I repeat the sentiment, parents do not merit any thing for their children. And yet parents may do that for their childen, to which God has promised the gift of a new heart and eternal life. A poor man, who lives wholly upon charity, may have a promise, that if he will daily come, as a beggar, to the door of a certain rich and benevolent man, he shall always receive sufficient supplies for himself and his needy children. This man has a promise of a support for himself and his children; upon the easy condition of being a daily beggar at the door of one, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not; yet who would infer, that the beggar supports himself and family, by his own earnings? Let this be applied to the case before us.

Some have thought that the matter has been carried too far, when it has been said, that if parents were to be faithful in keeping covenant, as it respects themselves, and their children; *all their children would be saved.* It is supposed by those, who make this objection, that the faithfulness of parents would issue in the salvation of *some* of their children. But if our text stands in opposition to the one sentiment, it does to the other. If the salvation of a *whole family*, through the covenant established with the head of it, be inconsistent with God's treating every man according to his own and not his father's character, then the salvation of *one child*, in a covenant way, would be equally inconsistent. If there is any promise to parents, that any of their children shall be saved, on any condition; if that condition is fulfilled on their part, I do not see why the promise does not extend to all their children. The covenant runs thus, 'I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee.' The promise is to you and to your children, the seed of the blessed of the Lord and their offspring with them. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body. Here observe, the blessing is to *the seed, the children, the offspring and the fruit of their body.* Does not this include all the children of covenant keeping parents? There is nothing said in the covenant about dividing them. But it is thought by some, that Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, and in his epistle to the Galatians, explains the matter, so as to mean only a part of the seed. We acknowledge, that the apostle explains it in such a manner as to make it evident, that none of the natural seed of believers will be saved, unless they become believers themselves; and that just so many of of the children of believers will be saved, as become united to Christ by a living faith, and no more. This was said in order to cut off all dependence on external privileges, as sufficient to introduce a soul into the kingdom of heaven. Nothing short of per-

sonal holiness will prepare any one to dwell in the presence of God. But did the apostle say, that God had made no promises to those parents, who commanded their children and households after them, that their children should keep the way of the Lord?

But again it will be urged, that *fact* proves the blessing of the covenant to be confined to a *part* of the seed of believers. Isaac, Eli, David and a great many other dear servants of God, had very wicked children. It is granted, that fact proves, that there are no covenant blessings for children, or that pious men may fail to obtain those blessings, by their failing to keep that part of the covenant, which respects the education of their children. A number of scriptures have been brought into view, which seem to promise blessings for the children of those, who keep covenant. These promises must not be trifled with, and treated as if they meant nothing. Let God be true, if every man is made a covenant breaker. We do not suppose, that the *mere existence* of piety in a parent, insures the piety of his seed. It is said in the 112th Psalm, 'Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord, who delighteth *greatly* in his commandments; *his* seed shall be mighty upon the earth.' But it will be said, that David was one, who delighted greatly in God's commandments; yet he had an Adonijah and an Absolom. It is required in the covenant, that in order to obtain the blessing of God upon our children, we should be very faithful to *them*, and do all in our power, to keep out those obstructions, which tend to hinder their religious education. Some good men are extremely inattentive to this important branch of practical religion. This was a very notorious fault in good Eli. And it is pretty evident, that David was quite deficient in the government of his house. Concerning Adonijah, it is said, his father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, why hast thou done so? This is about as much as to say, that

David had no authority, at least, over this child.—The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. The Most High, by proposing to godly parents, to bless their children, provided they most industriously and prayerfully train them up in wisdom's ways, no doubt, designs to excite their most earnest attention to this duty. If then, godly parents are quite remiss in this thing, it would give too much countenance to their sloth and neglect, if the blessing should still come on all their children. We could here remark, that probably one reason why the pious patriarchs and kings, with all their eminency in religion, saw no more piety in their families, was, because they did not confine themselves to one wife, which we are taught, Mal. 2. 15, is the way to seek a godly seed.

Infinite Wisdom has seen fit so to order it, that this gracious and infinitely rich covenant, should hitherto be but imperfectly understood, and that through unbelief and unfaithfulness, the blessings of it should be drawn out in but a small degree; but this does not alter the nature of the covenant, nor does it prove but that it is charged with a shower of blessings, which is about to be poured out upon the world. The children which are yet to be born, shall arise and praise God for such a covenant.

We shall now, at the close of this discourse, present in one point of view, the leading ideas, which have already been exhibited. 'Now, of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum.'

First. It is acknowledged, that the text, with the context, clearly holds forth, that it would be inconsistent for God to punish the innocent, or clear the guilty, let them be related to whom they may. In distributing rewards and punishments, God always regards the *personal character* of those, whom he rewards and punishes. Even those who are saved through the merit of Jesus Christ, will be treated ac-

cording to their own personal *character*; yet not according to their own personal *desert*. *All the righteous* will be rewarded, and *all the wicked* will be driven into hell; yet these righteous do not *deserve* any reward; for they *have* sinned.

SECONDLY. From the view which we have taken of this subject, it is also clear, that though it be inconsistent for God to punish the innocent, or clear the guilty; yet it is consistent with his character, as a Holy Governor, to suffer one creature to be the means of ruining another, by enticing and leading him into sin, as in the case of Satan tempting our first parents, and Jeroboam making Israel to sin. It is also as consistent, that one man should be an instrument of doing another, great good, and of drawing him to God. Paul was sent to open blind eyes, and turn men from satan to God. Though the apostle could not raise unconverted men to the kingdom of heaven; yet he was the instrument, which the mighty God, used to convert many from the error of their ways; by which they were prepared unto glory. Man was the instrument; but the power was of God.

THIRDLY. We have shown, that God might, consistently with his infinite regard to justice, make great use of parents, *to stamp the character of their children*; and yet the children be treated according to their own character. It has, I trust, been made to appear, that this was the tenor of the covenant of works, which was made with the first parents of mankind. 'By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners.' In consequence of the fall of our federal head, we are not *imputed sinners*, but *real personal sinners*; and because we are real sinners, we deserve to be punished for our evil nature, and our own transgressions.

FOURTHLY. In this view of matters, it is thought not to be inconsistent with the truth contained in the text, to suppose that God has promised those parents, who give their children to him in faith, sealing them

with the token of his gracious covenant, and who diligently bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that he will pour out his spirit upon their seed, and his blessing upon their offspring (Isaiah 44.) and so it makes them with their pious, faithful parents, heirs together of the grace of life. We not only think that such a covenant might consistently be made; but that there is abundant proof from the scriptures, that such a covenant is made. This it is conceived, is the very spirit of the covenant made with Abraham, the father of the faithful. In the 17th chapter of Genesis, Jehovah promises to be the God of Abraham and of his seed; and in the 18th chapter 19th verse, he speaks of Abrahams's faithfulness issuing in the piety of his children, and as being the condition upon which he would bestow promised blessings. All the promises, made to the friends of God, of blessing them in their *seed, children* and *offspring*, are built upon the plan, which has been just now exhibited. I cannot but think, that it is in view of a mutual engagement between the most merciful God and believing, godly parents (for none others ever did sincerely covenant with God) in which *they* engage to bring up their children for God, and that *He* engages, in case they do so, he will bless their children with *saving blessings*; that it is in view of such a covenant, infant circumcision and infant baptism have *all their significancy and importance.*

Fifthly. It is thought, that this view of the connexion between parents and children, in which parents are considered, as giving complexion to the character of their children, not only clears the divine Being from the imputation of injustice, but that it very gloriously exhibits his infinite regard to holiness, and his perfect opposition to sin. Since God is the Sovereign Potter, he has a most undoubted right to make vessels of honor or of dishonor, as it seemeth good in his sight. What a proof did he give Adam of his

infinite complacency in moral goodness, by assuring him that *his obedience alone* should infallibly secure holiness and happiness to the countless millions which should proceed from his loins. What a proof also has he given of his infinite hatred of moral evil, by causing *one sin* to plunge them all into a state of ruin. There is no wrong done to his posterity; for the state of ruin into which we are plunged is also a state of sin; indeed, this is the thing in which our ruin very much consists. Again, what a proof did God give of his pleasedness with Abraham's faith, by his promise to him of building up the church in his family. Why did God build up his church in the family of Abraham, rather than in the family of Abimelech, who was a cotemporary with the patriarch? Was it not evidently to manifest, that through Christ, God accepted of the faith of Abraham, and disapproved the unbelief of Abimelech? The God of Israel also manifested a peculiar delight in David, in distinction from Saul, by setting his son upon the throne after him. And since the Most High had an original right to make the descendants of Ham, servants to their brethren, was there not wisdom in this being done in a way of a curse upon their progenitor? In this way there is an infinite stigma placed upon his want of filial respect for his father; also, this sin in all others is made to appear exceedingly sinful. The father has given a much fuller display of his displeasure with the crucifiers of his well-beloved son, by entailing their sin and wretchedness on so many generations, proceeding from their loins, than he would have done, had he only punished them in their own persons. *Our children are dear to us all, whether we be frends or enemies to religion.* Keeping this truth in view, we can all see, that God gives a striking proof of his love of obedience, and hatred of rebellion, by telling the one, that he will bless, and the other that he will curse the fruit of their body.

The representation which has been given, in the last of these two discourses, of the *moral*, as well as *natural* relation between parents and children, will no doubt, appear to some extravagant, and of a dangerous tendency. If it appeared so to me, I could not, with a clear conscience, make such a representation. But the representation appears to me, not only scriptural, but highly important, and the less it is understood, the more necessary it seems to be, that it should be made public. Let me ask, what is the dangerous tendancy of this sentiment? Is it not calculated to make parents (all of whom have natural affection for their children) look about them, when they find, that they do, in an important sense, hold in their hands the eternal destiny of the offspring of their own bowels? Will pious parents be less determined, that for themselves and their house they will serve the Lord; that they will command their children and their household after them, by being told, that, if they do so, God will bless their children, and incline their hearts by his free spirit to walk in wisdom's ways? This will, it is presumed, above any thing, stir up parents to live holy lives and to be faithful to their children.

Will it do any thing towards making ungodly, prayerless parents feel easy in their sinful course, to read, that the *curse* of the Lord is upon the *house* of the wicked, and that the seed of evil doers shall not be renowned? These curses, which the scripture denounces on the children of those, who are out of Christ, are calculated to operate powerfully to deter them from going on in impenitence.

To the children of unbelieving parents I have a word to say; your case is by no means hopeless.—There is not an unalterable connexion between the state of your parents and your own. There is a noticeable distinction in the second commandment, between God's visiting the iniquities of ungodly parents

on their children, and his showing mercy unto the children of those who love him and keep his commandments. Take into view all that has been said, and you must be convinced, that if you die, it will be for your own sin and impenitence. If you see your father's sin, and do not the like, but turn unto God with your hearts, you shall not die, you shall shurely live.

Let the children of the pious feel the necessity of *personal piety*. Your parents must leave you behind them, when they go to glory, if you do not hear their counsel and follow their example in this, the day of your peace: for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

NATURE AND POWER OF TRUTH,

ILLUSTRATED IN

TWO DISCOURSES,

BY

DAVID PORTER,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CATSKILL, N. YORK.

SERMON I.

JOHN xviii. 38.

Pilate saith unto him, what is truth?

AFTER Jesus was apprehended by Judas Iscariot, he was first conducted to Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. In the next place, Jesus was bound and led to the palace of the high priest himself. Caiaphas, immediately, entered into conversation with him, respecting his disciples and doctrine. It was the intention of the high priest, that Jesus should be condemned and crucified; he did not, therefore proceed to try him, because the Jews had no authority, in any case, to inflict capital punishment. From Caiaphas's palace, the chief priests removed Jesus to Pilate's judgment-hall. It will be recollected, that at this time Judea was a Roman province, of which Pilate was governor. No sooner had the chief-priests surrendered up Jesus into the hands of Pilate, than he went out and conferred with them; for they did not themselves enter into the judgment-hall, as to tread on the floor of an uncircumcised heathen, they conceived would disqualify them to eat the passover, which was then

approaching. Pilate asked them, what accusation they had against Jesus, whom they had delivered bound to him. They identified no specific charge against him at first; but replied, that had he not been a malefactor they should not have commenced the prosecution against him. Pilate then told them to pursue the process in their own way, and according to their own law. The chief priests replied, that their authority did not extend to the taking of life, which they hoped might be the verdict against the prisoner. Pilate then left them and returned to the judgment-hall; and now commenced the most interesting trial ever witnessed by these heavens, and this earth!

The incarnate God was the prisoner at the bar! The inhabitants of both worlds were spectators of the scene! Consequences as eventful as eternity, were suspended on the issue of this trial!

The first question, Pilate asked Jesus, was, whether he was king of the Jews. To this Jesus did not give a direct reply. Pilate had unquestionably been informed that Jesus made this claim, and if by this he meant to assume the authority of a temporal prince it would amount to treason against Cæsar and the Roman goverment and subject him to capital punishment, Christ's answer to Pilate's question was this: '*sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?*' By this Jesus inquired, whether Pilate asked the question for his own satisfaction, or because of any suspicion he himself had of Jesus' assuming temporal dominion; or whether the accusation was from his prosecutors. Pilate perfectly understood him and replied in these words. Am I a Jew? intimating that he was not, and that during his regency in the province, he had never found Jesus disloyal to the government; that the accusation was from his own nation; that he acted only as judge, and wished Jesus to inform him respecting the facts of which he stood accused. Upon this Jesus replies with decision, and tells Pilate that his kingdom was

not of this world; that he never assumed princely authority, nor intermeddled with the affairs of civil government. And to assure Pilate of this fact, observes farther, that if his kingdom had been of this world, his servants would have fought, and that he should not have been brought, without resistance, to that tribunal. Pilate now admits, that Jesus claimed no temporal prerogatives, but is inquisitive to know, whether he was a king over any kingdom. Hast thou a kingdom over which thou presidest of any description? Jesus answers, 'thou sayest, that I am a king,' or thou mayest say in truth, that I am king and governor of the whole universe; and adds, for this end, or because I sustain this exalted character, was I born, that I should bear testimony to the truth on which my kingdom rests; and then asserts, that every one, who is of the truth, will hear his voice, or give the fullest credit to his declarations. Upon this Pilate asks the question, '*What is truth?*' and then as if enveloped in the full blaze of truth itself, retires from the judgment-hall, and informs the Jews, that he found no fault at all in him.

What I shall attempt at this time, will be an appropriate answer to Pilate's last question, '*What is truth?*'

That your minds may be assisted in this interesting subject, I shall,

I. Show, what we are to understand by truth in reference to this question. And,

II. Point out its nature and effects.

I. I shall show, what we are to understand by truth, in reference to the question, '*What is truth?*'

There is a rule of right in the nature of things prior even to the consideration of an express law, to which all moral beings are obliged to conform. Moral obligation is grounded in the *difference* between right and wrong which exists necessarily; and truth taken in the widest sense, is the exposition of this

difference exactly as it exists, in the mind of the infinite God. The divine law is a perfect rule, drawing an undeviating line between virtue and vice, requiring that we love the one and hate the other, according to the difference existing between them in the nature of things. The law of God is said to be holy, just and good, because it explains and enjoins obligation according to the eternal and unerring standard of rectitude. To this unalterable standard, all moral beings in the universe are, and will be forever, under obligation to conform. In this respect there is no difference between God and his creatures. The moral excellence of Deity consists in his disposition invariably to regard this eternal and uncreated standard of right. In his word, God frequently appeals to this standard in vindicating the rectitude of his administration in the government of the world. God speaks in Micah. vi. 3. 'O my people what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.' He submits his conduct to be approved by his creatures, only as it coincides with what is fit and right in the nature of things.

Neither does God criminate creatures, only as they violate moral obligation. God and his creatures are bound to do right by one and the same rule. If it should be imagined, at first thought, that God is not duly revered by conceiving him bound to do right, it might be asked, whether he would not be dishonored, upon the contrary supposition? If God were not bound to do right, would he refer his creatures to the nature and fitness of things in the vindication of the equity of his ways? It is the glory of God that he implicitly adheres, in all his acts, to the standard of moral excellence, and his obligation thus to do, explains the reasonableness and authority of his law. God's law is reasonable, not simply because it is *his* law; but because it is excellent, and in its own nature conformable to the eternal standard of recti-

tude. God's law is binding on us, not because we are commanded to yield obedience to it, but because his commandment is in itself right. The mouths of the wicked in the other world will be stopped, and they become guilty before God, because he will convince them, that the extent of his vindictive displeasure is conformable to the same fitness, as the law they had violated. God will not punish the wicked like an arbitrary despot, because he has more power than they; but because he is under an eternal obligation thus to do, from which he cannot depart, without forfeiting his holiness. To say this of the ever-blessed God, is vastly more honorary to his character, than to conceive him above such obligation. If we should say, God is above the eternal rule of right, and is not obliged to conform to it, no reason can be given to make it certain, that his adherence to this standard will be uniform. If we should say, that moral obligation does not arise from the necessary and immutable difference between right and wrong, we must admit, that it rests on some other foundation. And if on any other, it must be the revealed law. The revealed law of God is, that we should love him with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. To this law it is our indispensable duty to yield obedience, and for this reason and no other, that it is fit and right in the nature of things. Supposing God should create another world, and furnish it with a superior order of intelligences, and should make a law enjoining them to commit murder and suicide, would it be right in them to regard this law? It certainly would not, and for this plain reason, it would be contrary to what is right in the nature of things. It is impossible for God to change vice into virtue, or virtue into vice. Sin is wrong in its own nature, and it is impossible for God to make it otherwise by a law. It is hence evident, that law is not the ground of moral obligation; but moral obligation the ground

of law, since law is no farther binding, than it is right and fit in the nature of things. To say that God cannot destroy the standard of moral obligation, is saying no more, than that he cannot do wrong, and saying that he is under this obligation, is saying no less, than that he is infinitely good.

We are now prepared to answer Pilate's question, '*What is truth*? Truth in reference to this question is the testimony of Jesus Christ to the excellency and authority of the law of God, grounded on the eternal and unalterable difference between right and wrong, as it exists in the nature of things. To bear testimony to the truth in this wide extent, was the ultimate end for which Christ came unto the world, and performed his mediatorial work.

The scriptures are Christ's testimony. These contain a true account of sin and holiness, of their eternal and immutable difference, as they lie in the infinite mind of God. Jesus Christ is called 'the truth, the faithful and true witness,' and is the divine expounder of truth, as it exists in the nature of things. Truth, in its appropriation to the question before us, is the exposition of Jesus Christ, bequeathed to the world, of God's unalterable conformity to the standard of moral obligation in the kingdom of providence; or it is a dispensation of combined truth, which God, by an eternal rule of righteousness, was bound in honor to himself to exhibit, for the highest possible good of the universe. God is, in no case, amenable to creatures, as such, in themselves considered; but he is obliged, from the infinite perfection of his nature, to make that display of truth, which should set moral good and evil in such contrast, as should result most to his own honor, and to the holiness and felicity of his moral kingdom. If we only take the pains to examine closely the several parts of truth, Jesus has unfolded to the world, in the dispensation he has revealed and executed, we shall see that his

kingdom is a kingdom of truth in conformity to the eternal and immutable standard of rectitude.

Jesus in the dominion of his providence or by his whole work, has portrayed the divine character exactly according to its reality. He has not deviated in his representation from truth in the least possible degree. He attributed to God all those perfections and glories, which must exist in the glorious Creator and Governor of the world.

The account Jesus gives of God, perfectly tallies in all its applications and bearings, with the displays he makes of himself in the constitution and course of nature. Jesus Christ asserted the universal government of God, and this is as certain as that the world was indebted to a cause for its beginning.

2d. Jesus Christ testified to a law, which is binding on all moral beings, and which we may certainly know is the divine law. Human law never in any case whatever respects any other than overt acts. An action must be visible to reach human cognizance. Hence legislative bodies have never undertaken to give law for the regulation of the heart. They do not call men to an account for their secret sins. And it is impossible they should. Because a crime which is latent is not cognizable. But the law which Jesus came to magnify extends to every secret of the soul. Respecting the penalty annexed to this infinitely holy law, Jesus has given us the truth. The penalty is an expression of its infinite authority and shews the law to be like its author, transcendently excellent and pure.

3d. The testimony of Jesus Christ is true respecting human nature in its degenerate state. Men in every age have proved themselves by actions as far removed from God, as Christ represented them.—His assertions concur with those facts, which are certain evidence that he knew 'what was in man.'

Jesus when in the world, did not make a single mistake in judgment. Eighteen hundred years have never detected him in a fault. The portraiture he has drawn of this fallen world, the fountain of indwelling sin, and the degree and seat of it in the mind, as by him described, proves him omnicient and infinitely wise. Jesus' eye is all-piereing, not a passion, not a motion of the heart does he overlook. The correctnes of his sentiments respecting human guilt, holds an assent, even where it mortifies and irritates. His pencil drew a picture we know to be our own. The gospel is a glass, held out by Jesus in which we may see ourselves lost, and that he alone is our helper.

4th. Jesus Christ is perfectly correct and true in the system of rules he has given for the regulation of our moral conduct. You may con over every rule he has laid down, every moral sentiment he has expressed, and you will not find a single article, if adopted, and carried into practice, but would be most excellent in its opperation. Those most hostile to Jesus and his gospel are necessiated to confess his moral rules unexceptionally excellent. While Jesus is made the butt of ridicule and infidel scoffing, the impious assailants, are irresistibly constrained to a confession honorary to the truth, that there has never been a religion in the world so conducive to human happiness, so well calculated to alleviate wo, so friendly to social compact, as the christian religion. On reading the New Testament, infidels themselves, bring in this witness and leave it at the feet of Jesus.

If, therefore, the testimony of Jesus is true upon the points already suggested, his whole system must rest on a foundation which never shall be moved. The mysteries of Godliness, Christ's humanity and equality with God, his mediatorial kingdom, his efficacy and merit are *veracity* in capitals, 'known and read' of all heaven. High and lifted up Jesus is enthroned.

His name is truth. And for this end was he born, that he might rear a kingdom, from every nation, kindred and language, to be witnesses before him. Whatever clouds may now veil the minds of guilty men, whatever doubts they may entertain of the character of the Redeemer, and the doctrines which he taught; the time will come when the veil of mystery will be rent, when truth all potent—overwhelming truth, will carry conviction to all hearts. Then will every doctrine of the cross be believed; then will Christ Jesus appear in the resplendent glory of his character, and to him every knee shall ultimately bow, and every tongue confess, that his kingdom is a kingdom of truth, righteousness and light, and that in him 'is no darkness at all.'

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ILLUSTRATED IN

TWO DISCOURSES,

BY

DAVID PORTER,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CATSKILL, N. YORK.

SERMON II.

JOHN xviii. 38.

Pilate saith unto him, what is truth ?

IN the preceeding discourse an appropriate answer was attempted to this great question. Your attention is now invited to the

II. Particular, which is to point out the nature and effects of truth.

A subject, frequently rises in its importance, much higher, by attaching to it the effects of its operation, than by resting it on definitions, though ever so correct and pertinent.

Should you find a man who is a total stranger to the compass, and should you define to him all the parts destinctly, and how they are put together, so as to give him a perfect idea of the instrument, he would have but a very contracted view of its importance, till you had explained to him its utility, and the immense advantages resulting from it to the world. When you had done this, the subject would magnify in his eye, and he would appreciate it as one of the most useful discoveries ever made by the human mind. It is very much so with truth in application to the object before us. We have defined truth. We have

said to this effect, that it is the testimony of Jesus Christ to the divine law, grounded on the eternal and unalterable *difference* between right and wrong, as it exists in the nature of things, and is viewed by God. But if on this, or on any similar abstract definition, the subject should be rested, a very small proportion of the importance of it will be realized and felt, compared with what might be expected, in case we should trace out its peculiar qualities, and its tendency, and the effects of its operation.

If this part of the subject can be managed advantageously, if we can follow truth in the paths marked out by the great Master of Assemblies, it is hoped we shall go away more convinced, more humbled, more deeply penetrated with the truth, and with more earnest solicitude to know it as it is in Jesus Christ our Lord, than when we convened.

Shall we then behold in the light of God's word, *the truth*, which Jesus has disclosed, in its nature, in its tendency, and in the effects of its operation. And

1. Truth is enlightening.

Jesus Christ, who is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the beginning and the ending, and every *tope* stone of truth, is represented in the scripture, by way of eminence, and with peculiar emphasis, the enlightener of the world. John his forerunner speaks of him in these words. 'In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' Simeon a just and devout man, and one who waited for the consolation of Israel has given us the same testimony. 'For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.' David tells us, that 'the commandment of the Lord,' by which is meant, truth, 'is pure, enlightening the eyes.' It is the na-

ture of truth to enlighten. This will appear abundantly evident by marking the vestages and course it has taken. Those to whom the oracle of truth was first committed were enlightened far beyond those who were enveloped in heathenism. A comparative view of the nations of the world, from the first dawn of light shed forth by the son of righteousnes affords complete demonstration on this point. As early as the patriarchal age, we discover remarkable disparity between the nations which were given over to heathenism, and the few who were favored with the light of divine truth. While the Israelites to whom God gave the special communications of his mind, worshipped the one living and true God, the nations round about them, were begotted to the most abominable idolatry. They defied not only the hosts of heaven, but offered sacrifices to Gods of wood and of stone, and even creeping reptiles and fouls of the air. In this early period, the Egyptians prided themselves as superior to their neighbors; but their boasted fame was none other than an imaginary greatness. Magic was the principal acquisition to which their ambition aspired. In moral sentiment they were shrouded in midnight gloom. Call up to your recollection, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and look among their heathen cotemporaries for their equals, and do you find them? God had selected a people to be peculiarly his own, to whom he unfolded some pages of truth, which, though obscured by intervening clouds, so enlightened them, as to give decided ascendency to them, in point of correct information, over all the nations of the earth.

If from the patriarchal age we move farther down, the line of destinction between those God had undertaken to instruct, and those who were given over to their bewildered imaginations, gradually magnifies. As God discovered more of truth, so his people became more enlightened. One Israelite spiritually

taught, in the truth outshone the whole heathen world combined. The collected wisdom of the Babylonian monarchy, fell as far short of the wisdom of Daniel, as a dim taper is beneath the unclouded sun. The light of his mind was confessed as a prodigy by three of the greatest and most splendid monarchs, who ever ascended the eastern throne. The illumination of that wonderful man was the effect of truth taught him by the Lord God Almighty. Detached from this acqusition, he was no more than another man.

When Jesus made his discent he opened an immense treasure of truth to the world and demonstrated this fact, that truth is enlightening. Enlightened by Jesus from whom truth shone with unborrowed lustre, and shed its genial rays, a few plain men whose acquired abilities were inferior to no small proportion of their cotemporaries confounded the boasted wisdom of the great and honorable of the earth. During Christ's ministry and the apostolic age, there was such an astonishing disclosure of truth, that in a short time its cheering influence had extended through the greater part of the Roman empire. The shades of heathenish superstition and false philosophy were chased away by the irradiating beams of that immense combination of truth reflected by Jesus upon a benighted world, and on subjects of everlasting importance. Heathen temples and worship side by side with Christian assemblies stood abashed and dwindled into contempt. The votaries of Pagan divinities awakening from delusion, revolted in crouds from the shrines of superstition, to the courts of the living God. Concurring here with the celebrated Mosheim, very elegantly and justly observes.*

" Jesus, being ascended into heaven, soon shewed his aflicted disciples, that though invisible to mortal eyes, he was still their omnipotent protector and their

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benevolent guide. About fifty days after his departure from them, he gave them the first proof of that majesty and power to which he was exalted, by the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon them according to his promise. The consequences of this grand event were surprising and glorious, infinitely honorable to the Christian religion and the divine mission of its triumphant author. For no sooner had the apostles received this precious gift, this celestial guide, than their ignorance was turned into light, their doubts into certainty, their fears into a firm and invincible fortitude, and their former backwardness into an ardent and inextinguishable zeal, which led them to undertake their sacred office with the utmost intrepidity and alacrity of mind. This marvellous event was attended with a variety of gifts; particularly the gift of tongues, so indispensably necessary to qualify the apostles to preach the gospel in the different nations. The holy apostles were also filled with a perfect persuasion, founded on Christ's express promise, that the divine presence would perpetually accompany them, and shew itself by miraculous interpositions, as often as the success of their ministry should render this necessary.

Relying upon these celestial succours, the apostles began their glorious ministry, by preaching the gospel, according to Christ's positive command, first to the Jews, and by endeavoring to bring that deluded people to the knowledge of the truth. Nor were their labors unsuccessful, since in a very short time, many thousands were converted, by the influence of their ministry to the Christian faith. From the Jews they passed to the Samaritans, to whom they preached with such efficacy, that great numbers of that nation acknowledged the Messiah. And after they had exercised their ministry, during several years, at *Jerusalem*, and brought to a sufficient degree of consistence and maturity the Christian churches which were

founded in *Palestine* and the adjacent countries, they extended their views further, carried the divine lamp of the gospel to all the nations of the world, and saw their labors crowned, almost every where, with the most abundant fruits."

Light so resplendent as that beaming from the exalted redeemer, could not but irradiate every one who would open his eyes to the full orbed Sun. Truth has marked its way and carried with it such a blaze of light, as has set the christian in point of correctness in moral sentiment, as far superior to the heathen, as they are to the gods they adore. Whence all this wide disparity, if not the effect of truth?

When we compare those parts of the world, where the truth, as it is in Jesus, has been propagated, with those which have never received the heavenly message, have we not all the corroboration any fact can possibly have to sustain it, that truth is enlightening. If, in any one, there can be an inclination to hesitate respecting this sentiment, let him bestow a momentary look, on the northern and western aborigines of our own country; let him turn his thoughts on Asia and Africa, and most of the insulated parts of the globe, and then let him in his imagination bring them near our own enlightened habitation, and is there scarce a comparison to be formed between the contrasted objects in point of moral and intellectual attainments? And still we have but a faint picture of the enlightening power of truth. Its illuminating effect has been and is still, truly astonishing, as it exists in the chosen followers of the Lamb; and yet comparatively, the day is beginning to dawn. Girt about with truth, Jesus can do more still; and blessed be his name, he will, when he shall make the light of the moon, as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as the light of seven days cause such bright shining of truth, that the infant shall die an hundred years old in the knowledge of the Lord God.

When the new Jerusalem shall come down, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, it will bring such an orb of light from the majesty on high, as shall irradiate the minds of Jehovah's elect, surpassing all the experience of past ages, as far as the heavens are high above the earth. The truth of Jesus will never have completed its glorious work of enlightening. Jesus will set upon the throne of truth enlightening the redeemed more and more into the mysteries and glories of the triune majesty. Hence we may rest assured, that truth is enlightening

2d. With equal pertinency it may be said that truth is convincing. Truth is of such a nature as is calculated to produce conviction in the human mind. Men by nature are opposed to the truth, and are extremely averse to come to the knowledge of it as it is in Jesus; yet such is its nature that they are liable to be convinced by it. Multitudes were convinced of the truth before the incarnation; multitudes since that period, so that what has already transpired, proves to a certainty that truth is convincing. Many of Christ's enemies, and who continued to the last to be his enemies, were convinced by the truth of God. Conviction of truth is not holiness. It is not religion. Holiness belongs to the heart—conviction to the conscience. Devils may be convinced as well as Saints in glory. Devils believe and tremble. The inhabitants of the old world, the Sodomites, Pharaoh and his hosts, and the kings of Babylon, though extremely averse to it, were nevertheless convinced of the truth. Judas and Pilate, and many of the Jewish Sanhedrim, who were the immediate agents in the crucifixion, were brought to deep conviction of the truth. The Centurion at the cross made a public confession, of an entire conviction, in these expressions; 'Surely this man is the son of God.' That the nature of truth is convincing, we may rest assured from what has transpired in the world, since the first promulgation of the gospel. Mul-

titudes of all classes of men, from the sage philosopher to the rude barbarian, have set to their seal that God is true. God is continually carrying on the work of convincing men. Truth is calculated to produce conviction.

3d. Truth is not only enlightening and convincing, but it is unconquerable. The kingdom of truth, represented by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, is a kingdom which never can be vanquished. It is aloof from hostile access. The enemy may rise like a towering surge; and brake in upon it like a flood, and yet they are overcome in the attempt and fall maimed at its feet, like Dagon before the ark of the living God. The powers of darkness have assailed the truth in all the different modes of encounter, created subtlety could devise, and without the least effect. Nero, Decius Trajan, Severus and Julian the apostate, made the bold and fruitless attempt. They could do nothing; they left the field beaten and overcome. Modern infidels have made great promises to the world of the achievements they should execute in the abolition of the truth, as it is in Christ; but in the very moment of effort, truth has trampled them under foot, and laughed them to scorn. They have greatly mistaken the strength of the arm against which they have risen up. It is an arm shielded, which no pointed javelin can touch. As well might the child of yesterday, remove and shake the heavens and earth from their base, as for the whole combination of wicked men and devils remove one particle of truth fromits place.

True, the faithful, of whom the world was not worthy, have fallen a sacrifice in instances not a few, to the monsters of iniquity. Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, made a desperate effort to extinguish the light of divine truth, in the crucifixion of our Lord; but it is to be noticed, what they did was the establishment of one of the

greatest truths ever witnessed in the universe. In this flagrant transaction the divine determination was perfectly accomplished, and the faithfulness of God to his elect confirmed. The divine plan brought to light by Jesus, is eternal truth in conformity to the fitness of things; it is therefore superior to every opposing power that ever has or ever can conspire for its overthrow. The proof is demonstration itself, that truth is invincible. Of truth, we may say still more than this, it is irresistible. Let this be our

4th. Particular. Ever since the introduction of moral evil into the system, the wicked of both worlds, in self justification, have sought to confound the difference between right and wrong in the nature of things. For if they could destroy this ground of moral obligation, they could exculpate themselves for their rebellion against God. And God has given up a vast part of the wicked to take their course, that he might prove to them, that truth is irresistible; that neither his revealed will nor law, constitutes the difference between right and wrong, but are the faithful and perfect exposition of this difference. Nothing is more common in the world, than for men to labor with all the powers they possess, to make that appear right which is palpable wrong, and that wrong which is perfectly right. This is a prominent trait in sinful characters, both as respects principles of action, and actions flowing from such principles. This matter needs some illustration, that we might have a clearer view of the triumph and irresistible power of truth. In this illustration, we shall have recourse to facts. Satan undertook in tempting our first parents to eat the forbiden fruit, to make them believe he was their friend, and God their enemy. His object was to change the positions of moral good and evil, or of truth and falsehood, or so confound them as to destroy their difference. Adam and Eve acted upon his plan: and what was was the result? Why God met them in the garden, and no sooner did

they hear his voice, than they were completely overcome by the irresistible power of truth. The builders of Babel in defiance of the living God, undertook to erect a tower whose summit should reach heaven. In this enterprize they made no inconsiderable progress. They were ardent in the pursuit of their object, and no question, entertained high expectations of success. But when God came down, they were in a moment confounded by the irresistible force of truth, and abandoned their enterprize forever.

During the negociation of Moses, at the court of Pharaoh, there was the greatest effort made by the proud monarch and his magicians to confound right and wrong, and thereby to justify themselves in trampling on the rights of God and men. God took methods to instruct Pharaoh and his people by the irresistible force of truth, and the result was, they brought in verdict against themselves, and for God, that he was good and that they themselves were wicked. Had not truth been irresistible, they never would have signed this mortifying confession. Belshazzar was a monarch of the greatest empire then existing. 'He made a great feast to a thousand of his Lords and drank wine before the thousand. And he praised the Gods of gold and of silver, of brass and of iron, of wood and of stone.' God took occasion to let him see the truth in a most impressive manner. For in the same hour came forth a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw part of the hand that wrote. And the kings countenance was changed and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against the other.' And what was the cause of this anguish of soul, which shook every particle of his body? Why God shewed him the truth, and he found it to be irresistible. He could not stand under its weight.

Saul of Tarsus, verily thought through the blindness of his heart, he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And for this cause he received letters from Authority and went on his way towards Damascus. On this journey Jesus met him—yes he met him clad in the armour of truth, having on his vesture, written *King of Kings and Lord of Lords!* And how was Saul affected at the sight? Why, he instantly fell prostrate on the earth, and as he tells king Agrippa, he could not resist it. 'What was I that I should resist God?'

The thief on the cross came to the place of execution, an abettor of Christ's murderers, and filled with odium against Jesus. He was at first determined to maintain his opposition to the last extremity. But this was the time and place, eternally in Christ's mind, to make a display of his irresistible grace. Truth flashed into his soul like the forked lightening. He was overcome by the irresistible power of God, and offers this prayer in attestation of its reality. 'Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' In the day of God's power, in all cases, periods and parts of the world, the truth will prove itself to be irresistible. In this period, in this wicked generation, there are thousands of witnesses rising up for God and against themselves, that truth is irresistible. This will eternally be the case with the damned as well as the saved. They will yield to the irresistible force of truth. In the moral universe there will eternally be a concordance in this matter. The mouths of the wicked will be stopped, because of the irresistible operation of the truth upon their consciences. This brings me to a,

5th Observation, that truth is perfectly and eternally independent. It is impossible that it should be destroyed or weakened. As truth exists in the nature of things, it cannot be destroyed without destroying the nature of things. And this is beyond the

reach of all beings in the universe. It is no more possible for God to destroy the difference between right and wrong, which is the ground of truth itself, than it is, that he should annihilate his own existence. It is the glory of God that he cannot lie, and it is his glory that he cannot destroy the nature of things, and hence truth is eternally and unalterably independent. I add,

6thly. That truth is searching and penetrating. It is like the refiner's fire, it will take out every particle of alloy from the pure metal. It is like the fuller's soap, it will wipe off and expunge every minutia of filth and uncleanness. The nature of the truth, as we have it from the Lord God, is to hew away all the trash that comes in its way. It will go down into the hiding place of the *forger* of lies, and bring him out and lead him bound hand and foot to a tribunal, from which there is no escape. The co-worker with Satan, who denies that there is danger in sinning, is to be pierced right through, with the truth. Error is vulnerable in every part, and truth will follow it. It will seek it out, from all the mazes and labyrinths of hellish secrecy. It will so cut away root and branch as to leave the enemy of truth nothing on which to rest. It will leave him hopeless and defenceless, goaded by the stings of conscience and sunk under a sense of his own guilt. God's sovereignty, his absolute decrees, the final ruin of the impenetent, the permanency of Jesus' throne will cut up modern error, and make its avowers revolt with horror even at existence, and wish that they had never been born. Truth will have its way; Jesus will ride by its side conquering and to conquer. It will do all its work: it will palsy every tongue, that moves to its prejudice, and kindle a fire upon hellish festivity, that shall never be quenched. Truth is not confined by limits; it runs up to the Judgment seat.—It is Jesus' Throne---it is eternal and unalterable, and the

same in all worlds, and forever and ever. O blessed redeemer, wilt thou enrich us with the knowledge of thy truth.

7thly. Truth is humiliating.

Whenever truth is made efficacious to the heart, it empties the creature of self exaltation and glorying and postrates him in the dust. Truth always gives God the throne and the creature the footstool. Nothing stirs up the enmity of the carnal mind like truth seen in its connexion; and nothing makes the creature humble like truth made efficacious by the sovereign act of God. While through a deluded heart, proud man would fain conceive God to be such another as himself; yet when brought cordially to receive the truth, it is his chief joy that the Lord reigns.—Having by sovereign grace become willing that God should be God, the creature wants no other heaven than to be in his hand and to see him act. As the renewed man progresses in the knowledge of the truth, he loses in self-esteem and increases in humility. As God magnifies more and more in the eye of the believer, so he will find himself disposed to take a lower seat, and will fell himself lost in Jehovah's glory. Humility increases in proportion as truth is seen and relished. Truth will never have completed all its humiliating work. In the triumphant state, when truth shall shine in unsullied radiance, the glorified will veil their faces. One truth upon the back of another will rise in quick and eternal succession, and the mysteries of the Redeemer's character and work will so eclipse all finite excellence, as to produce the very perfection of humility in the myriads of God's elect in the world of eternal glory. Would any ask respecting the ground of increasing humility in the blessed; I answer, the ground is truth seen and loved, and showing a contrast between the creature and the creator. The more perfectly this contrast is made visible between the redeemer and the redeemed, the

lower will the creature choose to lie, and the more will he exalt God. It is the tendency of truth received, and admired to humble the creature more and more, and this will be its increasing effect, in heaven, to all eternity.

8thly. Truth is harmonious.

In some minerals there are substances of divers natures and qualities. From the same *strata* the chymist will extract a variety of substances, each of which has a nature peculiar to itself. When he has done this, he will reduce them back to their original composition. With truth it is different. It has only one simple nature. It is conformable to a rule which is eternal. It is, therefore, harmonious in its parts, and indivisible. In the whole disclosure of truth made by Jesus, there is not a symptom of discordance. The bible is a perfect *whole* consisting of parts, each bearing the signature of the one infinite God who cannot err. Truth is linked together in its nature, is so perfectly consistent with itself, that it is as easy to destroy its existence as its harmony. This golden chain unites in one common bond a kingdom of ten thousand time ten thousand, including not a dissenter from truth, not a discord in praise, who unceasingly exclaim before the redeemer's throne, 'Saying, great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints.' A few inferences will conclude. And

1. We may infer, that all moral beings, in the universe will finally agree in religious sentiments. The diversity of opinion on religious subjects, so prevalent in the world, is not owing to any defect in the understandings of men. Let a thousand men have an equal degree of conviction of any truth, and they will perfectly concur in opinion respecting that truth. Five hundred may be delighted, and the other five hundred totally displeased, with the object, but with an equal degree of conviction; opposition of moral feeling will never produce opposition of senti-

ments. And for this reason, conscience is the faculty which receives conviction, and over this the heart has no control. If the heart has no control over the conscience, then nothing prevents men from uniformity in religious sentiments, except an equal degree of conviction, and this they will ultimately have. For since truth is unchangeably the same and independent, and tends in its very nature to produce conviction, it is impossible for conscience when enlightened to view truth otherwise than it is; and when the moral universe shall be brought to this issue, there will be no more disagreement in religious opinions henceforward forever. We may reason thus with great safety, because we know from fact, that the vilest men, even thieves and murderers, have exactly the same opinions of right and wrong, so far as they are enlightened, as the best men living. So soon as Pharaoh, king of Egypt, became convicted, he concurred in opinion with Moses and Aaron respecting his own vileness and God's goodness. From numerous instances it is easy to see, that the result will be a perfect agreement in religious opinions, between moral beings, even from beelzebub up to the highest seraph before God's throne. Hence

2. Truth is complete master of natural conscience. Conscience is a power in man of accusing and excusing according to rectitude and not a power of controling the positions of virtue and vice. Conscience is obliged to report correctly, even though it reports against us. If truth were not master of conscience, it would be impossible for us to feel guilt. A sense of guilt however small, is certain evidence, that conscience is under the government of truth. It is true, conscience may be blunted for a while, it may not accuse at the very instant of sinning, but it will act in due time. It will—it must of necessity witness for Jesus, that his work is perfect. It is in vain for the wicked to make attempts to destroy conscience or keep it down. The business between truth and conscience must of necessity be done. The heart may

revolt at it, but truth will find its way to the sinner's retreat and sue up its demand, exacting the uttermost farthing; neither will conscience dispute the account. The wicked will as one, be brought to a spot of which they little dream. In an hour, when they think not, the inward monitor will make a report completely ruinous to the ungodly. They have the ingredients of a dreadful hell in their own minds.

3. We may infer that God's goodness will be as conspicious in punishing the wicked, as in saving the righteous. Some suppose that God's goodness will shield them from his vindictive wrath, and hence that there is no danger in sinning. This is making God the servant of their wishes, at the expense of his honor. A greater insult cannot be offered to God than this. It aims destruction against his throne. For the same reason God will save the redeemed, he will cast off the wicked. He will save the righteous because it is for the honor of his name, and he will damn the wicked for the same end. It is as right to punish the rebellous as to reward the obedient, and thus God, from his very nature, is bound to do. Should God depart from this rule of acting, and reward promiscuously, virtue and vice would stand on a level as viewed by him. But such procedure is incompatable with infinite goodness, and a violation of the eternal rule of rectitude as it exists in the nature of things. The very quarter from which the wicked are expecting peace and safety, is the place of alarm. God's goodness signs the doom of the incorrigibly wicked, and makes their ruin inevitable. The vindictive displeasure of God at sin, has been too often witnessed in the world to be disputed. His goodness and truth will cut short the sinner's vain expectations to his overthrow.

4. We may see the reason why Christ's kingdom has stood and cannot be destroyed. It is a kingdom of truth, and therefore permanent of itself. Nothing is so weak, but is capable of being held up by exteri-

or strength. Human power may for a while support inconsistency and error, but error cannot support itself. Withdraw support from false theories and they fall by their own weight. But with christianity it is not so. It can stand of itself, yea, it has resisted all that wicked men and devils could do to effect its ruin.—Its foundation, its superstructure, the whole edifice is eternal truth, and therefore no weapon formed against it shall prosper. When earthly thrones shall totter and crumble, Jesus' throne shall stand immoveable through eternal ages. Hence,

5. We infer the safety and blessedness of those who are united with Christ in the truth. Christ is their chosen king, and if he be for them, who can be against them? 'Happy followers of Jesus, because he lives, ye shall live also. Forget not the ruin from which you were taken, and the price of your ransom. You were conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. You were cast out into the open field to the loathing of your persons. You were without hope and without God in the world. Your sins gathered over your heads like a thick cloud. Sinai's mountain was all on fire, and the penalty due to sin was ready to fall on you and plunge you into endless pain. But then did the arm of the Lord bring salvation. Then, O then, was a time of love. I have found a ransom said the father; and the Son responds—Lo I come in the volume of the book that is written of me, I delight to do thy will. And did the Son of God descend so low as to take thy place thou most unworthy of all God's creatures! Yes, he did bleed for thee, and thy life is the price of blood. Rich, free grace, has brought thee out of darkness into God's marvellous light, and made thee an heir with Emmanuel, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. As Jesus is of the truth, so art thou, O thou highly favored of the Lord; and what manner of person oughtest thou to be! How faithful, how devoted to the kingdom, how valiant for the truth, how indefatigable in

the vineyard of God! Ye sons and daughters of the Lord, born of the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever, by the side of such prince will you ever grow faint and let down your watch? Remember ye have nothing to fear. Though the sea rage and the heavens gather blackness, though the hail descend, lightnings play, thunders roar, and the earth shake from its centre, yet in Jesus ye are secure. He lives. As he is true and faithful, your feet shall never slide. Keep your eye upon his blessed character, stay yourselves upon his truth, follow him whithersoever he goeth and glory in his presence.

6. We may infer, the wretchedness of those who are opposed in heart to the truth. The foundation of your hope is in the sand and cannot stand the day of trial. As you are opposed to the truth, you are opposed to God. You are dreaming of peace and safety, in a place of the utmost hazard. Do not for the world be indifferent to your situation, and the steps you are taking. Stop and pause! Remember you are in arms against a king more mighty than yourselves. Your disaffection with the truth is as preposterous as it is base. You are completely in God's hand, from which there is no release. While you are imagining your fortress is strong, and are defying the Almighty, you are shut in at every avenue, and absolutely taken. While you are at ease on you pillow, judgment slumbereth not, damnation lingereth not. From whatsoever pretext you have come out in hostile array against the truth, will you deem it too much to review, the ground you have taken, and the strength and excellence against which you are contending? If you find on mature deliberation, that your situation is unsafe, that your prospects for eternity can yeild no rest in the moment of dissolution, will you not flee for refuge to that rock which is higher than you? Hitherto you have been feeding on an airly phantom, but believe, 'if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed.' Reader, if this moment thou art a

despiser of gospel grace, yet reflect, you are hastening to the judgment to receive thy last sentence from which there is no respite, no reprieve. 'If once you fall beneath his stroke, there is no deliverer there.'

7. We may infer, that ministers of the gospel hold a place of immense responsibility to God and the souls of men. If they suppress the truth as it is in Jesus, for fear of offending their hearers; if they substitute laxness of principle, for the doctrines of the cross, dry outside morality for practical godliness, they do it at an awful peril. They are not placed on Jerusalem's wall to amuse the multitude with a mock religion in human attire. They are not sent forth to fabricate new theories, or gloss the truth, to render it less offensive to the carnal heart. For no such end was the christian ministery instituted. The gospel heralds are not at liberty thus to aspire. They are embassadors from God to deliver his message in its true spirit and genuine simplicity. If from this they depart, through cowardice or thirst for popular applause, they are no longer embassadors of Christ, but traitors to his cause. And can there be a higher crime committed against the Supreme Majesty, than coming out under a cloak of friendship for Christ, and then aiming destruction at his throne. Verily God will not hold them guiltless. Such treachery will not escape with impunity. And with what face will the unfaithful preacher meet his hearers at the judgment bar? He had taught his hearers; but had taught them to disbelieve. He had confirmed them in their guilt by refusing to expose it. He had blinded their eyes about God by keeping his character out of sight. He had feasted their pride, when they needed humbling. He had pleased their fancies, at the expence of their souls. He had inflated them with expectations of heaven, when on the brink of destruction, and closed their eyes, giving them God-speed with a lie in their right hand; and how is he to settle this account on the day of final reckoning! How is he to clear himself from

the blood of souls! Wherewith will he frame his plea in self defence, against his flock thus accusing and upbraiding? 'We were thy flock and thou wert our shepherd. With you were the treasures of knowledge and truth. And why didst thou withhold from us the messages thou wast sent to deliver. We are undone forever through thy unfaitfulness. You never described in our hearing the character of our Judge, nor the truth of his word. The doctrines you taught us to despise, we find to be the truth of God. You allowed us to sport with his sovereignty and decrees, and in this, thou didst awfully deceive us. You reproved us politely for disgraceful crimes, but never described to us the sin of our nature. When we were sometimes alarmed at our state and prospects, you hushed our fears by crying, peace, peace, whereas God had said, there is no peace to the wicked.' How overwhelmed with guilt and horror will such preachers be with their deceived hearers, on the great day of account. Ye who lead in the assemblies of the saints, and are embasadors of Christ to an ungodly world, can ye be indifferent to the high responsibility, with which you are cloathed? Your ministry is as eventful as eternity. Keeping nigh the standard of truth, may every word you utter be such as shall give you boldness and rejoicing in the day of Christ's appearing. Be not dismayed nor discouraged. Truth will outlive all opposition raised to its prejudice. Not as at the bar of Pontius Pilate, but before the whole assembled universe, Jesus will honor the truth, to which every conscience will ascent to the glory of God.

Finally. Let not a soul be indifferent to the truth. If you are saved it will be through a cheerful acquiescence with Jesus in the doctrines of his word. It is your life to be with Christ in the truth. You are rich for eternity if on this foundation, but if on any other, you are gone—gone, and lost forever. Amen.

LOVE TO CHRIST.

A SERMON.

BY

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JOHN xxi. 17.

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?

MANY there are, even in christian lands, who discard christianity; many rest in a cold assent to its doctrines, while they believe and know nothing of the heaven-born principle of vital religion in the soul. Like the poor brutes around them, they eat and drink and sleep, breathe and walk; while the interests of another life are thought, exclusively, to concern 'the weak, the sickly, the aged and the dying.' The hearts of others are so entirely occupied with business or amusements, that they remain strangers to their bible, to their Saviour, to themselves; strangers indeed to every thing which it is the great purpose of life to learn. Multitudes, in these awful circumstances, live with as much apparent tranquility as though they were perfectly assured, that christianity is a fiction and eternity a dream.

My brethren, are we immortal creatures? Shall these souls of ours survive the changes of time, and exist in glory or despair, when the petty interests of this mutable and perishing world shall have passed into oblivion? What subject can better deserve our attention than a careful inquiry into our own moral state and prospects for an endless hereafter? What

question can more solemnly address our interests or feelings, than that of the Divine Saviour, in its appropriate application to each heart, 'Lovest thou me?' In comparison with an inquiry, involving consequences of such infinite moment, all others are 'less than nothing.' Who can leave this point undecided, and rest easy? Who can decide it against himself, and feel safe? Earthly thrones and empires are trifles of a moment, when laid in the balance against the joys or sufferings of eternity.

At the last interview Christ had with his disciples, before his ascension, the question which I have chosen for a text, was addressed to Simon Peter. Thrice had he denied his Master at the high-priest's palace; and now thrice was he put upon the trial of his sincerity by this pointed interrogatory. Though Peter, as a christian minister, was required to give evidence of his love peculiar to his office, by feeding Christ's sheep and lambs, the subject is not necessarily limited to any class of christians or men. Let us suppose then, the divine Jesus to stand in the midst of us, and address us individually with this solemn, searching question, 'Lovest thou me?' Who of us could, understandingly, make the appeal to his omniscience, 'Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' To settle this point, to the satisfaction of an enlightened conscience, requires that we carefully examine the nature and fruits of love to Christ.

Let it be remarked then in general, that love to Christ, is something above the instinct of *natural gratitude.*

Thosewords of the appostle John 'We love him because he *first* loved us,' have been understood by some to import, that there can be no true love to Christ, which does not proceed from an apprehension of his special favor to us. Such an opinion, whether designedly or not, does really substitute refined selfish-

ness for holy affection. The love of Christ in the purchase of the cross and the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the effectual calling and sanctification of men is the *productive cause* of all the genuine love that exists in any human heart. In this sense, if we love him, it is because he *first* loved us. And gratitude, for favor so astonishing, is essential to the christian temper. But to love Christ from no other principle than the hope of being personally benefited by him, is clearly not to love him at all with any supreme affection. From the same temper, wicked Gallileans followed him, while he fed them; and wicked Gadarenes desired him to depart, when no selfish advantage was expected from his presence. To exercise this sort of love, is no more than publicans may do; and no more than Satan, if he could be released from suffering, might do, and be Satan still.

Let it be remarked again, that love to Christ is something superior to the exercise of mere *pity*.

Among the multitude that attended the Saviour from Pilate's judgment-hall, to the place of crucifixion, he observed some who were tenderly moved at his circumstances. With a perfect knowledge of their characters and prospects, he gave the prophetic admonition 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.' Whatever else these words imply, they seem evidently to indicate that the tears of some, on that occasion, flowed from no higher fountain than the instinct of compassion. From the same fountain they might have flowed as freely, on witnessing any other scene of deep suffering, especially of suffering innocence. A similar effect may be produced on persons of sympathetic minds by reading the history of the crucifixion. They may weep for Christ, while they know not what it is to love him. They may be sorry for a suffering Saviour, without any proper sorrow for sin, the occasion of his sufferings. They

may feel every exercise of natural humanity, and yet be strangers to every exercise of gospel humility.

The great inquiry remains to be answered, what is true love to Christ? I reply,

I. It is a proper and just regard to his whole character.

It is not a partial, transient emotion, but a permanent, moral temper. It is that animating, operative, vital principle of the new heart, which unites it to Christ, and 'enthrones him in the soul.' It is that disinterested affection which loves its object because it is 'altogether lovely.' He who possesses this temper, acknowledges Christ, not simply as the son of Mary, or the Prophet of Nazareth; but as an eternal and divine person: as possessing, equally with the Father and Spirit, all the attributes of the undivided Godhead. To regard the 'author and finisher of our faith,' as a mere creature, the equal of man, or at most, the bare superior of angels, is to deny the Lord that bought us. It is to sink the amazing scene on the hill of Calvary, to an event of common history. It is to blot out every syllable of *good news* from the gospel; to annihilate the faith and joy of the christian's heart, and to debar him from the possession or the hope of heaven. True love contemplates the Deity and atonement of Christ as inseparable. Here is room for its eternal exercise. The union of the divine nature with humanity, in the person of the Redeemer, gives to his sacrifice on the cross all its efficacy to vindicate the honor of the Godhead, and to ransom perishing men. Unitedly to celebrate this, in loud and everlasting anthems, will be the work and blessedness of those happy spirits that share in the benefits of gospel grace.

II. If we truly love Christ we shall possess a proper regard to the divine law.

Without seeing the perfection of this law, it is impossible to comprehend the design of his incarnation.

and sufferings, or to view his cross in any other light than as 'a stumbling block and foolishness.' Ignorance and mistake on this point have occasioned some of the most fatal errors in religion. To magnify the gospel, as some have done, at the expense of the law, is to dishonor the Saviour and endanger the souls of men. If the law be unjust, there can be no *crime* in transgression—no *grace* in forgiveness; and if so, the gospel, at best, is but, 'a cunningly devised fabel.' The perfect Author of both on this supposition, must be at variance with himself, and his moral kingdom must contain the radical principles of its own dissolution.

God challenges the supreme, undivided love of creatures as his due. He will submit to no compromise with any rival. He will allow of 'no other God, before him' in the affections. He demands an unconditional surrender of the heart,—the *whole* heart to himself. The great design of the gospel is, not to *invalidate* but, to *vindicate* and enforce these holy claims. If the preceptive demands of God's law require not too much of creatures, its penalty cannot be abated in behalf of transgressors, without some equivalent testimony of its perfection. An indiscriminate forgiveness of the guilty, without any adequate satisfaction for their offences, would be want of benevolence.

'A God all mercy, is a God unjust.'

If grace reign at all, consistently with the interests of the divine kingdom, it must reign through 'righteousness.' The Son of God came into 'the world to condemn rebellion against his Father's government, not to justify it: he came to establish and magnify the law, not to destroy it. Vain is the hope of indefinite and unconditional salvation to all men built on misapprehension of the atonement. Vain are all professions of love to Christ originating from the same source. Say what we will of our obligations to

the Redeemer, it is all *empty talk* if we do not feel that he came to deliver us from the just penalty of a righteous and violated law.

III. If we love Christ, we shall cordially approve of the doctrines which he taught.

Such are the eternal existence and infinite perfection of one supreme God, in three persons; his holy and immutable purposes; the unlimited extent and duration of his all-perfect, all-pervading and all-disposing providence; the awful depravity and perishing state of men by nature; the glorious fulness of the gospel atonement; the necessity of the supernatural, sanctifying agency of God's Spirit on the heart, of repentance, faith and evangelical holiness; the stability of the covenant of grace; the richness and perpetuity of its promises, and the endless state of bliss or misery, which will follow the great day of recompence. The friends of Christ love these doctrines, for the same reason that unholy hearts hate them; because they exalt God and humble human pride. That catholicism which confounds truth with error, which bids God speed to any thing and every thing assuming the name of religion, however much at variance with the vital principles of Christianity, is not the benevolence of the gospel.

IV. If we love Christ we shall sincerely and humbly accept the salvation which he offers—salvation from natural and moral evil—salvation by free grace.

The happiness to be enjoyed in heaven is exactly suited to the temper and feelings of the sanctified believer. There, God will be glorified. There, perfect, unceasing holiness will reign in every heart. To a soul that loves Christ, deliverance from misery is not enough, without deliverance from *sin*. Far would such an one think himself from happiness, to be rescued from hell, and left under the dominion of a wicked heart. The salvation of the gospel is there-

fore precisely such as suits the true christian. He is, in all respects, pleased with the heaven which the divine redeemer has purchased for his followers; and with the terms on which they are admitted to its enjoyment.

V. If we love Christ, we shall cheerfully submit to the services and sufferings of the christian life. Thus Peter evinced his love. Did he deny his divine Master? deny him in the face of solemn warnings and vows? deny him before his enemies and in an hour of awful trial? He did: and the mournful fact is recorded, as one among a thousand demonstrations, that the best of men are frail and fallible. But, as became a christian, he remembered that woful fall, with an acking, contrite heart. He remembered it, and 'wept bitterly.' He remembered it, and no more lacked for courage to do his duty. The beloved name which he abjured before Pilate, he was afterwards bold to acknowledge before Jews and Romans, in the streets and synagogues, in prison and on the cross. Behold the man who trembled at the voice of a damsel, triumphs amidst the flames of persecution! Undismayed at peril or suffering, in their most terriffic forms, he encounters with a martyr's intrepidity, chains, dungeons and death! Many would be glad to sit on Christ's right hand, without drinking of the cup that he drank of. Many vainly hope to *reign* with him, who refuse to *serve* him, or to *suffer* for him. When duty is easy and danger distant, the mere coward may seem courageous.—The good soldier of Christ is known by his constancy in the hour of trial. That service which costs him most, is the best evidence of his sincerty.—Through the varying scenes of wealth or poverty, honor or disgrace, he stands inflexible. He fears not the scoffs of dying men. He shrinks not from the terrors of a frowning world. The utmost that human power or malice can inflict, he dares to en-

dure, for so dear a Saviour. In so *good a cause*, suffering is pleasure, reproach is praise. 'The cup that our father hath given us, shall we not drink it? Blessed Saviour! By the bitterness of thy pains, we may estimate the force of thy love; and therefore, if thou so ordainest, welcome disappointment and poverty; welcome sickness and pain; welcome shame and contempt. If this be a rough and thorny path, it is one in which thou hast gone before us. Where we see thy footsteps, let us not repine*.'

VI. If we love Christ we shall labor for a thorough acquaintance with his religion. The modern opinion which disclaims any standard of faith, and maintains the innocence of error, is virtual infidelity. Does the gospel contain a scheme of truths which the son of God taught with his lips, exemplified in his life, and sealed with his blood? Can we then be innocent, wilfully or heedlessly rejecting any of these truths? If there be any need of a revelation from heaven, unquestionably it is important that the revelation should be *rightly* understood. It is implied in the character of true christians, that they have some acquaintance with the leading truths of the gospel. But their knowledge, in many cases, is much less than it ought to be, or than it need be. In religion, as well as other things, a little knowledge is often dangerous. Though a *little* knowledge might secure our own salvation—what then? Can we be christians on such narrow principles? Have the cause of truth, the salvation of souls, the honor of God our Saviour, no share in our regard? Think of an inquiring neighbor or an own child, under the burden of a 'wounded spirit,' coming to such a christian; coming perhaps to you, and begging instruction in the way of life. Alas, in so solemn a case, shall ignorance compel you to say nothing, or expose you to the hazard of saying what may be infinitely worse?

* Wilberforce.

When open and covert enemies of pure religion abound, when errors of every description are propagated with unexampled industry and zeal, shall those who are men in stature and christians by profession, remain babes in knowledge? Shall those who can talk understandingly and by the hour together, on common topics, be put to silence when a reason of their hope is required, or the very foundation of their hope assaulted? Shall they be so poorly equipped with armour, or so unskillful to use it, as to furnish occasion for profane triumph to the enemies of Jesus? Let us know that our love to Christ is, to say the least, very low and languid, if, at such a day as this, we can sit down supinely, in the neglect of a diligent, prayerful, systematic study of the scriptures; without understanding well, and being able to vindicate, the essential truths of the gospel.

VII. If we love Christ, we shall also love his true disciples.

It is characteristic of his followers that they 'love one another.' That bond of holy affection which unites them to their divine head, unites them to their fellow members. Redeemed by one Saviour, sanctified by one spirit, embracing one faith, heirs of one inheritance; their desires, pursuits, interests, sorrows and enjoyments are essentially the same. Their birth and residence may be in different quarters of the globe; they may be separated by intervening continents or oceans; still, they are brethren. In proportion as they have opportunity for familiar intercourse of hearts, their mutual love will be more strong and apparent. Especially will this be the case with those who meet, for the highest exercise of christian fellowship, at the same communion table. To those who love Christ, there is no privilege so exquisitely solemn and delightful as that of testifying their remembrance of his affectionate and dying commands. Upon this part of the subject, it is impossible to dwell without feeling its attractions. Cold

and hard as flint must be the heart, that does not here swell with emotions which language cannot utter.—There is something so ineffably tender and endearing in the Saviour's parting counsels to his little family—on their union to himself and among themselves, especially in his parting prayer that his disciples should love one another, that he who can read the latter part of St. John's gospel, without feeling his heart moved, I had almost said *melted*, has much reason to question his love to Christ.

VIII. If we love Christ, we shall possess a spirit of general good will to our fellow creatures. We shall embrace the whole 'family of man,' in our benevolent regards.

The gospel recognises no bond of union among intelligent beings, but love. When this becomes an universal principle of action, as assuredly it will, in God's appointed time, men will 'beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.' Earthly rulers will reverence the Ruler of heaven: earthly laws will accord with his laws. Man will cease to be the enemy of man. Peace, holiness and joy will pervade the earth. This will make happy families, happy nations and a happy world. A world, O how unlike one that is filled with discord and sin! When shall infatuated mortals, blind to their own true interest, cease to hate a religion which proclaims peace on earth and good will to men! When shall this divine religion extend its heavenly influence over the nations and heal this distracted, bleeding world of its enmities, its wars, and its miseries! 'Fly swiftly the intermediate years...Come, O come the delightful period,' when nations shall be born to God in a day, and unnumbered millions feel the power, and share in the blessings of gospel love! For this long predicted joyful day, shall not the friends of Christ and of human happiness, pray with united hearts!! 'Amen:...even so, come Lord Jesus.'

Finally; If we love Christ, we shall desire the universal spread of his gospel.

Millions of our race are perishing in ignorance of a Saviour. The infant settlements, spread over the wide wilderness of our own country, are lamentably destitute of religious instruction. Vast objects are here presented to awaken our Christian philanthropy: Objects which require us to love in *deed* as well as in word...to *act* as well as *pray*. Our brethren in the eastern hemisphere have nobly led the way and invite us to emulate their labors of benevolence. While thousands have joined in the animated prayer, to the head of the church, 'Thy kingdom come.' The heralds of the gospel have met around the globe. Where Satan's empire had remained quiet for ages, the standard of the cross has been displayed. Yes, in this sinful world, men have been found, that from love to Christ and immortal souls, could quit their pleasant homes for a dreary wilderness; encounter the perils of the deep to embrace their pagan brethren; and to publish the unsearchable riches of redeeming grace, could traverse the 'snowy cliffs of Greenland or the burning plains of Africa.' To unite in this work of love, 'a great door and effectual is opened' to the christians of America. More ministers are wanted. To say nothing of the lack of able and faithful pastors, for the supply of old and vacant churches; in the *new* settlements, the field is spacious but the labourers are emphatically few. Their condition claims the commisseration of all that have hearts to pray. O how earnestly should we implore the great head of the church, that he would raise up more Mayhew's and Elliot's and Brainard's; that he would sanctify the hearts of young men for himself; give them zeal to labor, and holy courage to suffer, if need be, in his service! The signs of the times summon us to diligence. The kingdom of Satan must fall:...*it will fall*. But its dying struggles may

shake the moral world to its foundation. Before the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, the contest betwixt truth and error, will probably be mighty and terrible. The trumpet sounds. Soldiers of Emanuel! prepare for battle. Is christianity then in danger? No. Impregnable walls surround the beloved city: Zion's God is wiser...is mightier than all her foes. He will take care of his own cause; but not by miracles. He will not set the elements to work to print bibles: he will not bid the winds blow stone and timber into temples of worship: he will not appoint the rocks or trees to preach the gospel:...No; he will fulfil his own promises by his own means. He will cause christianity to triumph and spread over the earth, by awakening its friends to united activity and prayer, and by raising up gospel ministers, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, who shall be ready 'both to be bound and to die also for the name of the Lord Jesus.'

The subject will be finished with four reflections.

1st. Christians are not sufficiently awake and engaged in the service of their divine master.

The petty pursuits of private interest, the applause, emoluments or contests of this transitory world, enkindle our burning zeal; while alas, our dull hearts are often indifferent to the honor of the immortal king, and the blessings of his everlasting kingdom! We crawl like reptiles; when we should stand up like men, and run, like christians, the race set before us. How do the children of this world rebuke our timidity and our indolence! See what waging of wars, enlisting armies and equipping fleets! what rapid journeys...what buying and selling...what industry, in the shop, in the field, in the market! Whence all this exertion? Do men spend days and nights of anxious toil...traverse the ocean and dig in the earth for the empty, fleeting happiness of time? They are in *earnest*. And should not men be in *earnest* that

seek the honor of Christ, and hope for solid, induring happiness in heaven? We go about our business with two much indifference. We read our bibles, as though we read them not. We pray, as though we prayed not. We preach, as though we preached not. We hear, as though we heared not. If the love of Christ dwell in the soul, it will burn and shine so that its *warmth* and *light* may be perceived by others. Brethren, shall the enemies of the cross longer triumph in our luke-warmness? Let us put them to silence by holding fast our profession and living like Christians.

2dly. Fellow Christians, are too great strangers. They are not free and familiar enough in religious conversation. A more perfect acquaintance with each other's spiritual circumstances would much better enable them to perform all the important duties of Christian fellowship. How many who meet at the same communion table here, and expect to meet in the same heaven hereafter, reside but a few miles, or perhaps rods asunder, and yet from year to year, do not spend an hour in friendly, unreserved interchange of views and feelings concerning the greatest of all subjects---the interest of the redeemer's kingdom and the salvation of their own souls. Is such the influence of Gospel Love? In no wise. The heart lies at the root of the tongue: out of its abundance, the mouth speaketh. On this principle, I affirm, some reasonable conclusion may be drawn, as to the state of vital piety in a church, from the freedom which its members enjoy, among themselves, in religious conversation. Can the business or trifles of this earth always employ our tongues, if our hearts are in heaven? Can we make those our chosen companions who expect from us so dreadful a compliment to *their* characters or *our own*, as to forbear speaking of him whom our soul loveth? The example of antient saints, recorded in God's holy book, demands our

imitation, 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often, one to another.'

3dly. We are not faithful enough in maintaining discipline. Solemn are our vows of allegiance to Christ: terrible the consequences of slighting his authority. Alas, brethren, that the order, peace, beauty and prosperity of his church should so often be marred by the careless or wilful negligence of his disciples! Alas, that when men point to his suffering cause, saying 'What are these wounds?' we are so often compelled to answer 'Those with which he was wounded in the house of his friends.' The world joins with the bible in demanding that the visible friends of Christ should do 'more than others.' Shall we cast a stumbling block before blind sinners to endanger their everlasting interests? Shall we tempt them to the false and fatal conclusion, that the church of God is a house divided against itself? Shall we mourn at the prevalence of bold impiety, and sigh over the decline of vital Godliness, while our own backslidings contribute to its decline? In plain truth, the discipline of our churches is awfully relaxed. In too many cases, it is nothing but a name. How can churches be in health and prosper, when the cords, with which Christ has bound them, are cut or untied... When the sacred inclosures of our Zion are laid open to the rude assaults of its enemies?

4thly. Humble, united, persevering prayer is a duty in which the visible family of Christ are too deficient. We pray indeed; but do we preserve the spirit of the duty? Do we pray as though we expected to be heard? Through the coldness of our hearts, do not our devotions often die on our tongues? If the inspection of our own characters and wants, does not furnish sufficient motives to animate our prayers, can we not feel for a world of sinners around us? Can we not feel for our guilty country...overspread with prayerless families, despisers of the gospel? 'Are we

blind also' to the 'signs of this time,' and deaf to the voice of heaven which cries in our ears, 'People of America! Choose ye this day whom ye will serve... Choose ye between Jehovah and Baal...between *reformation* and *ruin*.

Professed disciples of Jesus! what think you of this subject? The great, the momentous question, whether you love Christ or not, must soon be decided. If you serve him here, you will reign with him hereafter. If you are penetents on earth, you will soon be saints in glory. There, faith will be swallowed up in vision, and hope in consummate, endless enjoyment. There, christians from every clime and country will gather around their father's table; patriarchs and prophets; apostles and martyrs; the pious and faithful of every age, kindred and tongue will have a happy meeting, and that *happy meeting* will last forever. There, millions of redeemed souls will raise their joyful hosannas to the Lamb, while they look back on earth and time, where they were born to God, and trained for immortal bliss.

Sinners in Zion! what think you of this subject? Can you still live at ease, without Christ and without hope? Can you still shut the Saviour from your hearts, trifle with his authority and trample on his blood? Will you scorn the grace which he has purchased, and the glory which he offers? Then know assuredly that he will debar you from the blessings which you have so awfully undervalued, and consign you to the misery, which you have so foolishly refused to escape. 'To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.'

THE FOLLY, GUILT, AND MISCHIEFS OF DUELLING.

A SERMON.

BY

TIMOTHY DWIGHT, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF YALE-COLLEGE.

PROVERBS XXviii. 17.

A man, that doeth violence to the blood of any person, shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.

THIS passage of scripture is a republication of that general law concerning homicide, which is recorded in Gen. ix. 5, 6. "But surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

This law was published at the time, when the killing of beasts for food was permitted. No time could have been equally proper. As the shedding of animal blood would naturally remove the inherent horror at destroying life, and prepare men to shed the blood of each other; the law became indespensable for the prevention of this crime, from the beginning. It ought to be observed, that the detestation, with which God regards this sin, is marked *with a pen of iron in that singular declaration; At the hand of every beast will I require it.* If homicide is so odious in

the sight of God, as to expose the unconscious brute, which effected it, to the loss of his own life as an expiation; with what views must he regard a man, a rational agent, formed in his own image, when accomplishing the death of his brother man with design, from the indulgence of malice, and in the execution of revenge? As this original law was given to Noah, the progenitor of all postdiluvian men, it is evidently binding on the whole human race. Every nation has accordingly felt its force, and executed it upon the transgressor.

In the text, the same law is promulged with one additional injunction. '*He shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.*' However strongly the past services of the criminal, or the tender affections of his friends may plead for his exemption from the sentence; no man from any motive, or with any view, shall prevent, or even retard, his progress towards the punishment required. To this punishment God has consigned him, absolutely and with his own voice. No consideration, therefore, can prevent, or hinder, the execution.

A sober man would naturally conclude, after reading these precepts, that in every country, where their authority is acknowledged to be divine, homicide would in all cases, beside those excepted expressly by God, be invariably punished with death. At least, he would expect to find all men in such countries agreeing, with a single voice, that such ought to be the fact; and uniting with a single effort, to bring it to pass. Above all, he would certainly conclude, that whatever might be the decision of the vulgar, and the ignorant, there could be but one opinion, in such countries, among those who filled the superior ranks of society.

How greatly then, must such a person be astonished, when he was informed, that in christian countries only, and in such countries among those only,

who are enrolled on the list of superiority and distinction; homicide of a kind no where excepted by God from this general destiny, but marked with all the guilt, of which homicide is succeptible, is not only not thus punished but is vindicated, honored and rewarded, by common consent, and undisguised suffrage.

The views; which I entertain of *Duelling* may be sufficiently expressed under the following heads;

The Folly,
The Guilt, and
The Mischiefs, of this Crime.

Duelling is vindicated, so far as my knowledge extends, on the following considerations only; That it is

A punishment,
A reparation,
A prevention of injuries;
And a source of reputation to the parties.

If it can be shown to be neither of these, in any such sense, as reason can approve, or argument sustain; if it can be proved to be wholly unnecessary to all these purposes, and a preposterous method of accomplishing them; it must evidently fail of all vindication, and be condemned as foolish, irrational, and deserving only of contempt.

As a punishment of an offence, which for the present shall be supposed to be a real one, duelling is fraught with absurdity only. If a duel be fought on *equal terms*, the only terms allowed by duellists, the person injured exposes himself, equally with the injurer, to a new suffering; always greater in truth, and commonly in his own opinion, than that which he purposes to punish. The injurer only ought to suffer, or to be exposed to suffering. No possible reason can be alledged, why the innocent man should be at all put in hazard. Were the tribunals of justice to place the injured party, appealing to them for redress, in the same hazard of being obliged to pay a

debt, with the fraudulent debtor, in the same danger, of suffering a new fraud, with the swindler; or in an equal chance of suffering a second mayhem, with the assaulter of his life, or were they to turn him out upon the road, to try his fortune, in another robbery, with the highwaymen; what would common sense say of their distribution? It would doubtless pronounce them to have just escaped from bedlam; and order them to be strait-waistcoated, until they should recover their reason. Here the injured person constitutes himself his own judge; and resolves on a mode of punishment, which, if ordered by any other umpire, he would reject with indignation. What? he would exclaim; am I, because I have been injured once, to be injured a second time? And is my enemy, because he has robbed me of my character, to be permitted also to rob me of my life? Let it be remembered, that the decision is not the less mad, because it is voluntarily formed by himself. He, who wantonly wastes his own well being is of all fools the greatest.

As a reparation, duelling has still less claim to the character of rational. What is the reparation proposed? If it be any thing, it must consist either in the act of fighting, or in the death of the wrong-doer. If the injury be a fraud, neither of these will restore the lost property; if a personal suffering, neither can restore health, or renew a limb, or a faculty. Or if the wrong be an injury to the character, it cannot need to be asserted, that neither fighting as a duellist, nor killing the wrong-doer, can alter at all the reputation which has been attacked. He has, perhaps, been charged with *lying*. If the charge is just, he is a liar still. If it be known to be just, neither fighting nor killing his antagonist, will wipe off the stain. The public knew him to be a liar before the combat; with the same certainty they know him to be such after the combat. What reparation has he gained? Not

one man will believe the story the less, because he has fought a duel, or killed his man. If on the other hand, the charge is false, fighting will not in the least degree prove it to be so. Truth and falsehood must, if evinced at all, be evinced by evidence; not by fighting. In the days of knight-errantry this method of deciding controversies had, in the reigning superstition, one rational plea, which now it cannot claim. God was then believed to give success invariably, to the party which had justice on its side. Modern duellists neither believe, nor wish God to interfere in their concerns.

The reparation, enjoyed in the mere gratification of revenge, will not here be pleaded, because, duellists disclaim with indignation the indulgence of that contemptible passion. In the progress of the discourse, however, this subject will be further examined.

As a prevention of crimes generally it is equally absurd. I acknowledge readily, that the fear of danger and suffering will, in a greater or less degree, prevent crimes, and that men may, in some instances, be discouraged from committing private injuries by the dread of being called to account in this manner. But these instances will be few: and this mode of preventing injuries is almost wholly ineffectual.—Duelling is always honorable among duellists; and to be generally practised, must be generally esteemed honorable. That which is honorable will always be courted. The danger to life, will therefore recommend duelling to most men instead of deterring from it. None who call themselves men of honor, ever shew any serious reluctance to give, or accept, a challange. All are brave enough to hazard life, whenever the hazard becomes a source of glory.—Every savage, that is, every man in a state of nature, will fight because it is glorious. Civilized men have exactly the same natural character. Persuade them

that it is glorious to give and accept challenges, and to fight duels, and few or none of them will hesitate. The dread of danger, appealed to, and relied on, in this case, is therefore chiefly imaginary.

Few persons will ultimately, be prevented from doing injuries by duelling. Affronts on the contary will be given, merely to create opportunities of fighting. Fighting in the case supposed, is glory; and to acquire glory men will make their way to fighting through affronts, injuries and every other course of conduct, necessary, or believed to be necessary, to the end. This fact in the case of humbler and more vulgar battles has long been realized. Many a bully spends a great part of his life in fighting; and will at any time abuse those, with whom he is conversant, not from malice nor revenge, but merely to provoke them to battle, that he may obtain the honor of fighting. The nature of all classes of men is the same; and polished persons will do the same things which are done by clowns, without any other difference than that which exists in the mode. The clown will fight vulgarly; the polished man genteelly: the provocations of the clown will be coarse; those of the gentleman will be more refined. With this dissimilarity excepted, the conduct of both will be the same; but as the gentlemen will feel the sense of glory more exquisitely, he will seek it with more ardour, and do wanton injuries with more frequency, and less regret. Thus the ultimate effect will be to increase, and not to prevent, injuries; and the extent of the increase cannot be measured.

Besides, injuries so slight as to be ordinarily disregarded; nay, imaginary and unintended injuries, will, amidst the domination of such pride and passion, as regulate this custom, be construed into serious abuses; and satisfaction will be demanded with such imperiousness, as to preclude all attemps at reparation, on the part of the offender; least, in the very

offer of them, he should be thought to forfeit the character of an honorable man. Whenever fighting becomes the direct and chief avenue to glory, no occasion, on which it may be acquired, will be neglected. The loss of any opportunity will be regarded of course as a serious loss; and the neglect of the least, as a serious disgrace. The mind will, therefore, be alive, vigilant, and jealous, least such a loss, or such a disgrace should be incurred. Almost every thing, which is either done, or omitted, will by such a mind be challenged as an affront, and resented as an injury. Thus the injuries, which will be *felt* will be incalculably multiplied.

To what a condition will this reduce society? But duelling is considered as a *source of reputation*. In what does the reputation conferred by it, consist?

The duellist is a brave man. So is the highwayman, the burglar, the pirate, and the bravo, who derives his name from gallant assassination. Nay, the bull-dog is as bold as either. Bravery is honorable to man, only when exerted in a just, useful, rational cause; where some real good is intended, and may hopefully be accomplished. In every other case it is the courage of a brute. Can a man wish to become a competitor with an animal?

But this claim to bravery is questioned. If from the list of duellists were to be subtracted all those, who either give, or receive challenges from the fear of being disgraced by the omission, or refusal; how small would be the remainder? But is acting from the fear of disgrace, merely, to be regarded as bravery in the honorable sense; or as courage in any sense? Is it not, on the contrary, simply choosing, of two evils, that which is felt to be the least. Is there any creature, which is not bold enough to do this?

Genuine bravery, when employed at all, is always employed in combating some real evil; something which ought to be opposed. When public opinion

is false and mischievous, it will of course meet resolutely, public opinion; and dare nobly to stem the torrent, which is wasting with its violence the public good. Genuine bravery would nobly disdain to give, or receive a challenge; because both are pernicious to the safety and peace of mankind. No man is truly great who has no resolution to withstand, and will not invariably and undauntedly withstand every false and ruinous public opinion.

But suppose it were really reputable in the view of the public, the question would still recur with all its force. Is it right? Is it agreeable to the will of God? Is it useful to mankind? No advance is made towards the defence of duelling, until these questions can be answered in the affirmative. The opinion of the public cannot alter the nature of moral principles, nor of moral conduct. In the days of Jeroboam, the public opinion of Israel decreed, and supported, the worship of the two calves; and both before, and afterwards, sanctioned sacrifices of children to Moloch. The public opinion at Carthage destined the brightest and best youths in the state as victims to Saturn. In a similar manner public opinion has erred endlessly in every age and country. An honest and brave man would in every such case have withstood the public opinion and would firmly resolve with Abdiel to stand alone rather than fall with multitudes. He who will not do this, when either the worship of a stock, the immolation of a human victim, or the murder of his fellow men, is justified by public opinion, is not only devoid of sound principles, but the subject of miserable cowardice. It is a mockery of language, and an affront to common sense, to call him, who trembling for fear of loosing popular applause, sacrifices his faith and his integrity to the opinion of his fellow men, by any other name than a coward.

But duellists claim the character of *delicate and peculiar honor*. On what is this claim founded? Are

they more sincere, just, kind, peaceable, generous, and reasonable than other men? These are the ingredients of an honorable character. They themselves cannot deny it. That some men who have fought duels, have exhibited greater or less degrees of this spirit, I shall not hesitate to acknowledge. Men of real worth have undoubtedly been guilty of this folly and sin, as well as of other follies and other sins. But these men derived all their worth from other sources; and gained all that was honorable in their minds, and lives, by their character, as men, and not as duellists. As duellists they fell from the height, to which they had risen. He who will explain in what the honor or the delicacy, of the spirit of duelling consists, will confer an obligation on his fellow men, and may undoubtedly claim the wreath due to superior intellect.

How generally are duellists, on the contrary, haughty, overbearing, quarrelsome, passionate and abusive; troublesome neighbours, uncomfortable friends, and disturbers of the common happiness? Their pretensions to honor and delicacy, are usually mere pretensions; a deplorable egotism of character, which precludes them from all enjoyment, and prevents those *around them* from possessing quiet, and comfort, unless every thing is conformed to their vain and capricious demands.

There is neither delicacy, nor honor, in giving, or taking, affronts easily, and suddenly; nor in justifying them on the one hand, or in revenging them on the other. Very little children do all these things daily, without either honor or delicacy, from the mere impulse of infantine passion. Those who imitate them in this conduct, resemble them in character; and are only bigger children.

But duelling is reputable in the public opinion. I have already answered this declaration; but I will answer it again. Who are the persons of whom this public

is constituted? Are they wise and good men? Can one wise and good man, unquestionably wise and good, be named, who has publicly appeared to vindicate duelling? If there were even one, his name would ere this, have been announced to the world. This public is not then formed of such men, and does not include them in its number. Is it formed of the mass of mankind; either in this, or any other civilized country? I boldly deny, that the generality of men, in any such country, ever justified duelling, or respected duellists. Let the appeal be made to facts. In this country certainly, the public voice is wholly against the practice. Some persons who have fought duels, have unquestionably been here respected for their talents, and their conduct; but not one for duelling. The proof of this is complete. This part of their conduct is never the theme of public, and hardly ever of private commendation. On the contrary, it is always mentioned with regret, and generally with detestation. Who then is this public? It is the little collection of duellists, magnified by its own voice, as every other little party is, into the splendid character of the public. That duellists should pronounce duelling to be reputable cannot be thought a wonder, nor alledged as an argument.

But it is dishonorable not to give a challenge, when affronted; and to refuse one when given. Who can endure the sense of shame, or consent to live in infamy? What is life worth without reputation, and how can reputation be preserved, as the world now is, without obeying the dictates of this custom?

This, I presume, is the chief argument, on which duelling rests; and by which its votaries are, at least a great part of them, chiefly governed. Take away the shame of neglecting to give, or refusing to accept a challenge; and few men would probably enter the field of single combat, except from motives of revenge.

On this argument I observe, that he, who alleges it, gives up the former arguments of course. If a man fights *to avoid the shame of not fighting*, he does not fight, to *punish*, repair, or prevent an injury. If the disgrace of not fighting, is his vindication for fighting, then he is not vindicated by any of these considerations; nor by that of delicate honor, nor by any thing else. The real reason, and that on which alone he ultimately relies for his justification is, that if he does not fight, he shall be disgraced; and that this disgrace is attended with such misery, as to necessitate and to justify, his fighting.

In alleging this reason, as his justification, the duellist gives up, also, the inherent rectitude of duelling and acknowledges it to be in itself wrong. Otherwise he plainly could not need, nor appeal to, this reason, as his vindication. The misery of this disgrace, therefore, is according to his declaration, such as to render that right, which is inherently, and which, but for this misery, would still be wrong, or sinful.—This is indeed a strange opinion. God has, and it will not often be denied that he has, prohibited certain kinds of conduct to men. These he has absolutely prohibited. According to this opinion, however, he places men by his providence in such circumstances of distress, that they may lawfully disobey his prohibitions; because otherwise, they would endure intolerable misery. Has God, then published a law, and afterwards placed men in such circumstances, as to make their disobedience to it lawful? How unreasonably, according to this doctrine, have the scriptures charged Satan with sin. His misery, as exhibited by them, is certainly more intolerable than that, which is here professed, and of course will warrant him to pursue the several courses, in which he expects to lessen it. This is the present plea of the duellist; Satan might make it with double force.

Had the Apostles bethought themselves of this argument, they might, it would seem, have spared

themselves the scorn, the reproach, the hunger, the nakedness, the persecution, and the violent death, which they firmly encountered, rather than disobedience to God. Foolishly indeed must they have gone to the stake and the cross, when they might have found a quiet refuge from both in the mere recollection, that the loss of reputation was such extreme distress, as to justify him who was exposed to this evil, in any measures of disobedience, necessary in his view to secure his escape.

What an exhibition is here given of the character of God? He has published a law, which forbids homicide, a law universally acknowledged to be just and particularly acknowledged to be just in the very adoption of this argument. At the same time it is in this argument averred, that he often places his creatures in such circumstances, that they may lawfully disobey it. Of these circumstances every man is considered as being his own judge. If then any man judge that his circumstances will justify his disobedience, he may according to this argument lawfully disobey. If the argument were universally admitted, how evident is it, that every man would disobey every law of God, and yet be justified? Obedience would therefore vanish from men, the law become a nullity, and God cease to govern and be unable to govern his creatures. This certainly would be a most ingenious method of annihilating that law, every *jot and tittle* of which he has declared *shall stand* though to fulfil it *heaven and earth pass away.*

On the same ground might every man, in equal distress, seek the life of him who occasioned it however innocently; and hazard his own. But poverty, disappointed ambition and a thousand other misfortunes, involve men in equal sufferings; as we continually see by the suicide which follows them. Of these misfortunes, generally, *men*, either intentionally, or unintentionally, are the causes. He, therefore who causes them, may, on this ground, be lawfully put to death

by the sufferer. What boundless havoc would this doctrine make of human life; and how totally would it subvert every moral principle?

How different was the conduct of St. Paul, in sufferings, inestimably greater than those here alleged? *Being reviled*, says he, *we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.* Thus he acted, when, as he declares in the same passage, *he was hungry, and thirsty, and naked, and buffeted, and had no certain dwelling place.*

But what is this suffering? It is nothing but the anguish of wounded pride. Ought, then, this imperious, deceitful, debasing passion to be gratified at the expense of murder, and suicide? Ought it to be gratified at all? Is not most of the turpitude, shame, and misery, of man the effect of this passion only? Angels by the indulgence of this passion lost heaven; and the parents of mankind ruined a world.

But a good name is by the scriptures themselves asserted to be an invaluable possession. It is. But what is a good name in the view of the scriptures? It is the result of wisdom and virtue; not of folly and sin; a plant brought down from the heavens, which will flourish, and blossom, and bear fruit forever.

But is not the esteem of our fellow men an inestimable enjoyment? And have not wise men, in every age of the world, given this as their opinion? The esteem let me ask of what men? The esteem of banditti is certainly of no value. The character of the men is, therefore, that which determines the worth of their esteem. The esteem of wise and good men is undoubtedly a possession, of the value alledged; particularly, because it is given only to wise and good conduct. If you covet esteem then, merit it by wisdom and virtue; and you will of course gain the blessing. By folly and guilt you can gain no applause, but that of fools and sinners; while you assure yourself of the contempt and abhorrence of all others.

I shall conclude this part of the discussion with the following summary remarks.

Duelling is eminently absurd, because the reasons, which create the contest, are generally trivial. These are almost always trifling affronts, which a magnanimous man would disdain to regard. A brave and meritorious officer in the British army was lately killed in a duel, which arose out of the fighting of two dogs.

As an adjustment of disputes, it is supremely absurd. If the parties possess *equal skill*, innocence and crime are placed on the same level; and their interests are decided by a game of hazard. A die would better terminate the controversy; because the chances would be the same, and the danger and death would be avoided. If the parties possess *unequal skill*, the concerns of *both* are committed to the decision of *one*; deeply interested; perfectly selfish; enraged; and precluded by the very plan of adjustment from doing that, which which is right, unless in doing it, he will consent to suffer an incomprehensible evil. To avoid this evil he is by the laws of the controversy, justified in doing to his antagonist all the future injustice in his power. Never was there a more improper judge; nor a more improper situation for judging. To add to the folly, the very mode of decision involves new evils; so that the injustice already done can never be redressed; but by doing other and greater injustice.*

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* *This, however, is beyond a doubt the real state of the subject. Duellists profess to fight on equal terms: and make much parade of adjusting the combat so as to accord with these terms. But all this is mere profession. Most of those, who design to become duellists, apply themselves with great assiduity to shooting with pistols at a mark placed at the utmost usual fighting distance. In this manner they prove, that they intend to avail themselves of their superior skill, thus laboriously acquired, to decide the combat against their antagonists. It makes not the least difference, whether the advantage consists in better arms, a better position, an earlier fire, or a more skillful hand. In each case the advantage lies in the greater probability which it furnishes one of the combatants of success in the duel. Superior skill ensures this probability: and is therefore, according to the professions of duellists an unfair and iniquitous advantage.*

Finally, it is infinite folly, as in every duel, each party puts his soul, and his eternity, into extreme hazard, voluntarily; and rushes before the bar of God, stained with the guilt of suicide, and with the design of shedding violently the blood of his fellow men.

The *guilt of duelling* involves a train of the most solemn considerations. An understanding, benumbed by the torpor of the lethargy, only would fail to discern them; a heart of flint to feel them; and a conscience vanquished, bound and trodden under foot, to regard them with horror.

Duelling is a *violation of the laws of man. Submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*, is equally a precept of reason and revelation. The government of every country is the indispensable source of protection, peace, safety, and happiness, to its inhabitants; and the only means of transmitting these blessings, together with education, knowledge, and religion, to their children. It is therefore a good, which cannot be estimated. But without obedience to its laws, no government can continue a moment. He, therefore, who violates them, contributes voluntarily to the destruction of the government itself, and of all the blessings which it secures.

The laws of every civilized country forbid duelling, and forbid it in its various stages by denouncing against it severe and dreadful penalties; thus proving, that the wise and good men of every such country have with one voice, regarded it, as an injury of no common magnitude. The duellist, therefore, openly and of system, attacks the laws, and the peace, and the happiness, of his country; loosens the bonds of society; and makes an open war on his fellow-citizens, and their posterity.

At the same time, he takes the decision of his own controversies out of the hands of the public, and constitutes himself his own judge, and avenger. His arm he makes the umpire of all his concerns; and in-

solently requires his countrymen to submit their interest, when connected with his own, to the adjudication of his passions. Claiming, and sharing, all the blessings of civilized society, he arogates, also, the savage independence of wild and brutal nature; wrests the sword of justice from the hand of the magistrate, and wields it, as the weapon of an assassin. To him government is annihilated. Laws and trials, judges and juries, vanish before him. Arms are his laws and a party his judge; his only trial is a battle, and his hall a field of blood.

All his countrymen have the same rights which he has. Should they claim to exercise those which he claims, what would be the consequence? Every controversy, every concern, of man would be terminated by the sword and pistol. Civil war; war, waged by friends and neighbours, by father, sons, and brothers; war, of that dreadful kind, which the Romans denominated a tumult; would spread through every country: a war, in which all the fierce passions of man would be let loose; and wrath and malice, revenge and phrenzy, would change the world into a dungeon, filled with maniacs, who had broken their chains, and glutted their rage with each other's misery. Thus duelling universally adopted, would ruin every country, destroy all the peace and safety, and blast every hope, of mankind. Who but a fiend would willingly contribute to this devastation?

The guilt, begun in the violation of the laws of man, is finished in the violation of the laws of God. This awful Being who gave us existence, and preserves it, who is every where, and sees every thing; who made, and rules the universe; who will judge and reward, both angels and men; and before whom, *every work, with every secret thing shall be brought into judgment;* with his own voice proclaimed to this bloody world, from Mount *Sinai*, 'Thou shalt not kill.' The command, as I explained it the last season in this place,

forbids killing absolutely. No exception, as I then observed, can be lawfully made to the precept, except those, which the Lawgiver has himself made. These I further observed, are limited to killing beasts, when necessary for food, or plainly noxious; and putting men to death by the sword of public justice, or in self defence; whether private or public. This being the only ground of justifiable war. As these are the sole exceptions, it is clear that duelling is an open violation of this law of God.

The guilt of duelling in this view is manifold; and in all its varieties is sufficiently dreadful to alarm any man, whose conscience is susceptible of alarm, and whose mind is not too stupid to discern, *that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

If the duellist is a *mere creature of solitude*, in whose life or death, happiness or misery, no human being is particularly interested; if no bosom will glow with his prosperity, or bleed with his sufferings; if no mourner will follow his hearse, and no eye drop a tear over his grave; still he is a man. As a man, he owes ten thousand duties to his fellow men; and these are all commanded by his God. His labors, his example, his prayers, are daily due to the neighbor, the stranger, the poor, and the public. He cannot withdraw them without sin. The eternal Being, whose wisdom and justice have sanctioned all these claims, will exact the forfeiture at his hands; and inquire of the *wicked and slothful servant*, why, in open defiance of his known pleasure he has thus shrunk from his duty, and buried his talent in the grave.

Is he a son? Who licensed him in rebellion against the fifth command of the decalogue, to pierce his parents hearts with agony, *and to bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave?* Why did he not live *to honor his father and his mother;* to obey, to comfort, to delight, and to support them in their declining years; and to give them a rich reward for all their

toil, expense, and suffering, in his birth and education, by a dutiful, discreet, and amiable life, the only reward which they ask? Why did he shroud the morning of their happiness in midnight; and cause their rising hopes to set in blood? Why did he raise up before their anguished eyes the spectre of a son, slain in the enormous perpetration of sin; escaping from a troubled grave; or coming from the region of departed spirits, to haunt their course through declining life, to alarm their sleep, and chill their waking moments, with the despairing, agonizing cry,

> "Death! tis a melancholy day
> "To those that have no God."

Is he a *Husband?* He has broken the marriage vow; the oath of God. He has forsaken the wife of his youth. He has refused to furnish her sustenance; to share her joys; to sooth her sorrows; to watch her sick bed; and to provide for his children, and hers, the means of living here, and the means of living forever. He *has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.* Where, in the fatal, guilty moment, when he resolved to cast away his life, were his tenderness to the partner of his bosom; the yearnings of his bowels towards the offspring of his loins; his sense of duty; his remembrance of God? In every character, as *a dependant creature, as a sinful man,* his eternal life and death were suspended on his forgiveness of his enemies. He who alone can forgive sins, and save sinners, has said, *If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly father forgive you.* He has gone farther. He has forbidden man even to ask pardon of God, unless with a forgiving spirit to his fellow men. In vain can the duellist pretend to a forgiving temper. If he felt the spirit of the cross, could he possibly for an affront, an offence lighter than air, shed the blood of his neighbor. Could he plunge the friends of the sufferer into an abyss of

anguish; sink his parents into irrecoverable despair; break on the wheel the hearts of his wife and children; and label on the door posts of his house—*mourning lamentation and woe?*

Satisfaction for a professed injury is the very demand which he makes; the only basis of his contest. Is this the language of forgiveness? It is an insult to common sense, it is an outrage on common decency, to hold this language; and yet profess this temper. The language is the language of revenge. The spirit is the spirit of revenge. The varnish, notwithstanding it is so laboriously spread, is too thin to conceal the gross materials, or to deceive the most careless eye. Revenge for a supposed affront, revenge for wounded pride, for disappointed ambition, for frustrated schemes of power, dictates the challenge, seizes the weapon of death, and goads the champion to the field. Revenge turns the heart to stone, directs the fatal aim, and gloomily smiles over the expiring victim. Remove this palliation, miserable as it is, and you make man a fiend. A fiend would murder without emotion; while a man is hurried to the dreadful work by passion only.

But what an image is presented to the eye by a man, thus dreadfully executing revenge? A worm of the dust; a sinful worm, an apostate, who lives on mercy only; who could not thus have lived, had not his saviour died for him; who is crimsoned with ten thousand crimes, committed against his God; who is soon to be tried, judged and rewarded, for them all; this worm raises its crest, and talks loftily of the affront it has received, of injured honor, of wounded character, and of expiation by the blood of its fellow-worm. All this is done under the all-searching eye, and in the tremendous presence of JEHOVAH; who has hung the pardon of this miserable being on his forgiveness of his fellow. Be astonished, *O heavens, at this!* and thou earth, be horribly afraid!

Nor is this crime *merely an execution of revenge*; it is a cold deliberate revenge. The deliberate killing of a man is *murder*, by the decision of common sense, by the decision of human law, by the decision of God. How few murderers have an equal opportunity, or equal advantages, to deliberate? By a mind informed with knowledge, softened with the humanity of polished life, enlightened by revelation; conscious of a God, and acquainted with the Saviour of mankind, a cool, deliberate purpose is formed, cherished, and executed, of murdering a fellow creature. The servant, who forgave not his fellow servant his debt of an hundred pence, *but thrust him into prison, was delivered over to the tormentors by his Lord, until he should pay the ten thousand talents, which he owed, when he had nothing to pay*? What will be the destiny of that servant, who in the same circumstances, for a debt, an injury, of a tenth part of the value of an hundred pence, robs his fellow servant of his life? Had an Apostle; had Paul; amidst all the unexampled injuries, which he suffered, sent a challenge, or fought a duel, what would have become of his character, as an apostle, or even as a good man. This single act would have destroyed his character, and ruined his mission. Infidels, would have triumphantly objected this act, as unquestioned proof of his immorality, of his consequent unfitness to be an Apostle from God to mankind, and of his destitution, therefore, of inspiration. Nor could christians have answered the objection. But can that conduct which would have proved Paul to be a sinner, consists with a virtuous character in another man?

Had the Saviour of the world* (I make the unnat-

* *It is I believe universally admitted by Christians, that the conduct which would have been sinful in Christ, considered merely as placed under the law of God, and required to obey it, is sinful in every man acquainted with the gospel; and that the conduct of Christ as a moral being, is in every case, which is applicable to our circumstances, a rule of duty to us. I have*

tural supposition with shuddering, but I hope with becoming reverence for that great and glorious person) sent a challenge, or fought a duel, would not this single spot have eclipsed the Sun of Righteousness forever? Can that spot, which would have sullied the divinity of the Redeemer, and obscured his mediation, fail to be an indelible stain, a hateful deformity, on those whom he came to save? *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

All these things, reason, and humanity, and religion, plead; yet how often, even in this infant country, this country boasting of its knowledge and virtue they plead in vain! Duels in great numbers are fought; revenge is glutted; and the miserable victims of wrath and madness are hurried to an untimely end. Come then, thou surviving and, in thine own view, fortunate and glorious champion, accompany me to the scenes of calamity which thou has created, and survey the *mischiefs of duelling*.

Go with me to yonder church yard. Whose is that newly opened grave? Approach, and read the letters on the yet uncovered coffin. If thou canst retain a steady eye, thou wilt perceive, that they denote a man, who yesterday beheld, and enjoyed the light of the living. Then he shared in all the blessings, and hopes, of life. He possessed health, and competence, and comfort, and usefulness, and reputation. He was surrounded by neighbors who respected, and by friends who loved him. The wife of his youth found in him every joy, and the balm of every sorrow. The children of his bosom hung on his knees to receive his embrace, and his

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put this strong case, because I believe few of those, who may evade with various pretences the preceeding arguments will be at a loss to determine here. In the same manner divines customarily make the supposition of injustice, falsehood, or other turpitude, and apply it to the divine character; to shew, forcibly, what deplorable consequences would follow, were the supposition true.

blessing. In a thousand designs was he embarked, to provide for their support and education, and to settle them usefully and comfortably in the world. He inspired all their enjoyments; he lighted up all their hopes.

Yesterday he was himself a creature of hope, a probationer for immortality. The voice of Mercy invited him to faith and repentance in the Lord Jesus Christ, to holiness, and to heaven. The day of grace shone, the smiles of forgiveness beamed, upon his head. While this happy day lasted, God was reconcileable, his Redeemer might be found, and his soul might be saved. The *night* had not then *come* upon him, *in which no man can work*.

Where is he now? His body lies mouldering in that coffin. His soul has ascended to God, with all its sins upon its head, to be judged, and condemned to wretchedness, which knows no end. Thy hand has hurried him to the grave, to the judgment, and to damnation. He affronted thee; and this is the expiation, which thy revenge exacted.

Turn we now to the melancholy mansion, where, yesterday, his presence diffused tenderness, hope, and joy. Enter the door reluctantly opening to receive even the most beloved guest. Here mark the affecting group assembled by this catastrophe. That venerable man, fixed in motionless sorrow, whose hoary head trembles with emotions unutterable, and whose eye refuses a tear to lessen his anguish, is the Father who begat him. That matron, wrung with agony, is the Mother who bore him. Yesterday he was their delight, their consolation, the staff of their declining years. To him they looked under God, to lighten the evils of their old age; to close their eyes on the bed of death; and to increase their transports throughout eternity.

But their comforts and their hopes have all vanished together. He is now a corpse, a tenant of the

grave, cut off in the bloom of life, and sent unprepared to the judgment. To these immeasurable evils thou hast added the hopeless agony of remembering, while they live, that he was cut off in a gross and dreadful act of sin, and without even a momentary space of repentance, a remembrance which will envenom life, and double the pangs of death.

Turn thine eyes, next on that miserable form, surrounded by a cluster of helpless and wretched children, see her eyes rolling with phrenzy, and her frame quivering with terror. Thy hand has made her a widow, and her children orphans. At thee, though unseen, is directed that bewildered stare of agony. At thee she trembles; for thee she listens; lest the murderer of her husband should be now approaching to murder her children also.

She, and they, have lost their all. Thou hast robbed them of their support, their protector, their guide, their solace, their hope. In the grave all these blessings have been buried by thy hand. If his affront to thee demanded this terrible expiation, what, according to thine own decision, must be the sufferings, destined to retribute the immesaurable injuries which thou hast done to them.

The day of this retribution is approaching. *The voice of thy brother's blood crieth from the ground, and thou art now cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood. A mark is set upon thee* by thy God; not for safety, but destruction. Disease, his *avenging Angel*, is preparing to hurry thee to the bed of death. With what agonies wilt thou there recal thy malice, thy revenge, and the murder of thy friend? With what exstacies of woe will thy soul cling to this world; with what horror will it quake at the approach of eternity! Alone, naked, drenched in guilt thou wilt ascend to God. From him what reception wilt thou meet? From his voice what language wilt thou hear?

Depart thou cursed unto everlasting fire. And lo! the melancholy world of sin and suffering unfolds to receive thee. Mark in the entrance, the man, whom thou has plundered of life, and happiness, and heaven already waiting to pour on thy devoted head for the infinite wrongs which thou hast done to him, the wrath and vengeance of eternity.

At the close of the awful survey, cast thine eyes once more around thee; and see thyself, and thy brother duellists, the examples, the patrons, and the sole causes, of all succeeding duelling. Were the existing advocates of this practice to cease from upholding it; were they to join their own efforts to the common efforts of man, and hunt it out of the world; it would never return. On thee, therefore, and thy companions, the innumerable and immense evils of future duelling are justly charged. To you, a band of enemies to the peace and safety of man; a host of *Jeroboams, who* not only *sin* but *make Israel to sin* through a thousand generations, will succeeding ages impute their guilt and there sufferings. Your efficacious and baneful examples, will make thousands of childless parents, distracted widows, and desolate orphans, after you are laid in the grave. You invite posterity to wrest the right of deciding private controversies out of the hands of public justice; and to make force and skill the only umpires between man and man. You entail perpetual contempt on the laws of man, and on the laws of God; kindle the flames of civil discord; and summon from his native abyss anarchy, the worst of fiends, to lay waste all the happiness, and all the hopes of mankind.

At the great and final day, your country will rise up in judgment against you, and accuse you as the destroyers of her peace, and the murderers of her children. Against you will rise up in judgment all the victims of your revenge, and all the wretched families, whom you have plunged in hopeless mis-

ery. The prowling Arab and the remorseless savage, will there draw nigh, and whiten their crimes by a comparison with your's. They indeed were murderers; but thy were never dignified with the name, nor blessed with the privileges, of Christians. They were born in blood, and educated to slaughter.—They were taught from their infancy, that to fight, and to kill, was lawful, was honorable and virtuous. You were born in the mansion of knowledge, humanity, and religion. At the moment of your birth you were offered up to God, and *baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* You were dandled on the knee, and educated in the school, of piety. From the house of God you have gone to the field of blood; and from the foot of the cross to the murder of your friends. You have cut off life in the blossom, and shortend, to the wretched objects of your wrath, the day of repentance and salvation. The beams of the Sun of Righteousness, shining with life-giving influence on them, you have intercepted; the smile of mercy, the gleam of hope, the dawn of immortality you have overcast forever. You have glutted the grave with untimely slaughter, and helped to people the world with perdition.—Crimsoned with guilt, and drunk with blood, Nineveh will ascend from the tomb, triumph over your ruin, and smile to see her own eternal destiny more tolerable than yours.

verse, he says : ' Ye have heard that it has been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.' This was the very dictate of the natural heart. ' But I say unto you, love your enemies ; bless them, that curse you ; do good to them that hate you ; and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you. For if ye love them, which love you,' what reward have ye ? Do not even the publicans the same ? And if ye salute your brethern only, *what do ye more than others* ? Do not even the publicans so ?'

This question contained in the text, may be justly considered as amounting to a positive injunction : ' Christians, it is my expectation—it is my will, *that* ' *ye do more than others*. Others love themselves, ' and love those who promote their personal interest ; ' but you must have that general benevolence, that ' love to God and man, which shall enable you to *do* ' *good* to your enemies, and to stand ready to sacri- ' fice your lives in the service of God.'

Are these *hard sayings* ? Does the Redeemer of men require more of his elect, than is reasonable ? By no means : the Master whom we serve, is not hard, or austere.

To impress upon your minds the reasonableness of our Saviour's requirement, that *christians should do more than others*, I observe,

1st. More is done for christians, than for others.

True salvation is purchased for the whole world. But such is the depravity of human nature, that men, unassisted by special grace, *will* not come unto Christ, that they may have life. By nature christians are as perverse and obstinate as others. But to them, God has, in infinite mercy, granted this *special grace*, this richest of heavenly gifts, without which, all other blessings were in vain. Their proud hearts have been humbled ; their blind eyes have been opened. The snares of the devil, in which they have been entangled, have been broken, and his

CHRISTIANS BOUND TO DISTINGUISH THEMSELVES FROM THE WORLD.

A SERMON

BY

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MATTHEW V. xlvii.

—What do ye more than others?

HE who knew what was in man, addressed himself directly to the heart. His mode of teaching was calculated to bring out to view every trait in the human character; and to shew, not only to others, but to ourselves, what we are. That strong propensity in human nature to conform to a sinful world is particularly condemned; and christians are called upon to *distinguish* themselves from others, by their piety and good works. Christianity requires activity. He who would be a follower of *Him*, 'who went about doing good,' must not indulge in sloth and inactivity; but, like a watchman, must be constantly on his guard against a subtle enemy, and ever ready to answer the calls of his Lord and Master.

The eyes of the Jews were upon Christ and his disciples: The eyes of the world are upon us. Mankind estimate the christian religion, by the lives of christian professors.

In order to prepare the minds of his disciples for that vital and active piety, which he was about to inculcate, the Saviour brings out to their view, in the context, the character and life of sinners. In the 43d

From this near relation of believers to God, their obligations are enhanced; they are bound to do more than others; to be more holy, more devoted to the cause of God. In a peculiar manner ought they to be patterns and examples in piety, in humility, in meekness, and in faith. To be externally religious, to maintain good outward conduct, without possessing a spirit of true piety, will not come up to the obligations of believers. The Pharisees were very scrupulous in their observance of the Jewish law, burdened as it was with rights and ceremonies; but our Lord in his public preaching, assured his hearers, that except their righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the Scribes and Farisees, they should in no wise enter into the kingdom of God.

The near relation of believers to God is a reason why they should not yield themselves the servants of sin. They in an essential manner are bound to serve God in spirit and in truth. Denying ungodliness, they, should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. God expresses his astonishment at the conduct of christians. 'Here O heavens, and give ear O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!' Believers standing to God, in the relation of children to a father, are bound to honor and reverence him; to discover an attachment to his interest, to walk as Christ walked.

The Roman Censors took such a dislike to the son of Scipio Africanus, that they plucked the ring from his finger, on which was engraved the image of his father. They would not suffer the degenerate son, who had none of the virtues of his father, to wear his picture.

Shall those walk in darkness, whose father is light; who ought to be the first to reverence and to adore him!

3d. Christians should do more than others, because they profess more. As trees are know by their fruits,

so Christ's followers are to be known by their works. There are some who profess to know Christ but in works deny him, being abominable, disobedient and to every good work reprobate. The man does not appear in what he says, but what he does.

Believers in professing Christianity and dedicating themselves to God, have solemnly engaged to make the whole law and gospel of Christ the rule of their life, no plea which they can make can free them from this covenant obligation. They are to be wholly the Lords. They have engaged to be his. They ought therefore to distinguish themselves from the people of the world. What would pass unnoticed in the people of the world, would be a great crime in them. Herod could live in adultery with his brother Philip's wife and it be thought no crime; but it was unpardonable for our Lord to go in to be a guest with sinners, or to eat with unwashen hands.

In the apostolic days it was said of the saints that the world took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. Their life and conversation no doubt gave evidence that they were on the side of Christ. So christians in professing godliness have engaged to give the same evidence; and to do this, they must be eminently holy. They must walk in newness of life—in new obedience.

4th. It is incumbent on believers to do more than others, because their conduct is more observed and noticed by the world.

We are, saith the Apostle, a spectacle to men and angels. The eyes of the world are attentively turned upon the professors of religion. They as carefully watch for their errors, as though they expected their fall would procure their own salvation. This should make them circumspect and guarded; they should condemn those by their lives who condemn them with their lips. The direction is explicit, 'come ye out from among them, and be ye separate.'

Believers are required to keep themselves pure from the pollutions of the world. To this end, the devout Psalmist prays 'Teach me thy way O Lord and lead me in plain paths, because of mine enemies.' The malicious designs—the lying in wait of his enemies, was the reason why the Psalmist wished to be directed in duty, why he wished to be more circumspect and guarded in his behaviour.

Says a pious divine: 'if you walk in the unpaved way of licentious looseness, the world will not go backwards, like Shem and Japhet, to cover your nakedness; but they will march forward, like cursed Ham, to uncover your nakedness and make it more shamefully to appear.' The ungodly make use of your weakness as a shield for their own wickedness. When reproved for their wickedness, they will bring forward your vices and follies as a defence for themselves. By your committing small errors, they think themselves justified in the commission of great crimes. They will sooner allow their own enormities, than your small infirmities. To deprive sinners of this reason, this pretext for sin, let your pure lives shut their impure lips. To your virtues they are blind; but your foibles, they view with opticks clear.—One transient eclipse of the sun, excites the astonishment, and arrests the attention of a gazing world, but when shining in his full orbed splendor, is unnoticed. One crime into which you fall, will, call forth more observations, than a whole life of the most exemplary piety. David's sin with Bathsheba, has drawn upon him, and upon religion in general, torrents of censure, and has been improved as a defence of whole lives of the most enormous wickedness. One scar, may mar the beauty of the fairest face. One wound which Christ may receive in the house of his friends, may do more injury to the cause of religion, than a thousand attacks from without.

5thly. Believers should do more than others, that it may appear that they *are* more than others.

The judgment of the world is not founded on professions, but conduct. If good fruits do not appear in the life and conversation of christians, their professions are vain. Unbelievers will pronounce them hypocrites and no better than themselves. To bear the *name* of christians, and yet walk in the courses of the wicked, is an inconsistency of which the world will take advantage. The ruling temper of the heart, is ever visible in the outward conduct. Where the heart is of a good constitution, the life will be of a fair complexion.

If the will is subdued and brought into subjection by divine grace, this will be manifest in the life and conversation; the walk will be in newness of life, in obedience to the divine law. Grace will not always lie buried in obscurity; it will at times appear and cast a dazling lustre on its possessor. It is the command, the solemn injunction of Christ to his disciples, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your father who is in heaven.'

6thly. Christians are bound to do more than others, because they are hereafter to be judges of others.

As the scriptures clearly teach us, that there is a day appointed when the whole assembled universe will be judged, so they likewise teach us, that God, Christ, and the Saints, have each their parts assigned in the transactions of that day. God passes the sentence, Christ executes it, and the Saints approve of it. Do ye not know saith the Apostle, to his christian brethren, that the Saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy of the smallest matter?

The time is approaching, it will soon come, when we, when all the myriads of the apostate race of Adam,

shall be summoned to judgment by the trumpet of the arch-angel. Then the wicked will come forth like miserable captives from their dungeons, filled with horror by the stings of conscience and apprehensions of their approaching doom, while the saints will rise out of their graves with joy and gladness in their countenances, and approach with rapture the solemnities of the judgment. Enoch the seventh from Adam, prophesied saying, 'Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all. When the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'

Now, the wicked take it upon them to judge the saints. They pass their censures and pronounce condemnation upon God's children as they see fit. Some they denounce as the most arrant hypocrites; others as deluded fanatics, deceived themselves and labouring to decive others.

The professions and devotions of christians are frequently made a subject of ridicule by the wicked. They will accuse them of exhibiting to the world much outward show of religion, while they carry within them hearts desperately wicked: of being like whited sepulchres, beautiful without; but within full of uncleanness. The malicious censures of the wicked are often very forcibly felt by christians: they acknowledge them just and are depressed and overcome with a sense, of their sins, and of the dishonor they have brought upon the religion they profess.—The trials they experience are so great, that they feel the full force of the observation of the Apostle—'If we have hope in this life only, we are of all men the most miserable.'

But christians, you have no cause to faint. The accusations of the wicked, will not disgrace you in the view of your heavenly father. You are yet to judge the world. You are to give your according appro-

bation to the final sentence which shall be pronounced upon those guilty men, who have with such violence and malignity traduced your characters before the world. You will yet, O believer, be fully vindicated before all the assembled universe. It will be made to appear, that though you had many imperfections yet your motives and springs of action in religious pursuits, were good, and that they have been maliciously misrepresented by wicked men.

But how will you be able to pass a righteous sentence on others, for those sins of which yourselves are guilty? This consideration should induce you to take an elevated stand; to pursue a course of life, which shall reflect, lustre on your profession, and make the fact strikingly to appear, that you *do*, and *are*, more than others. By the holiness of *your* lives, you should show the unrenewed in heart, the wickedness of *theirs*. By your exemplary walk, you should endeavour to wipe away the prejudice which the world entertain of religion. Let there be no longer occasion for it to be reproachfully said, 'that with your lips you profess Christ; but in your works *you* deny him.

7thly. The disciples of Christ should do more than others, because they *expect* more. They do not view this world as their abiding place; they consider themselves as pilgrims and sojourners in a strange land. They are seeking another and a better country, that is an heavenly. They expect soon to enter upon that incorruptible inheritance, which fadeth not away; which Christ has gone before to prepare for those that love him. John in his first epistle says, Every man that has this hope, purifies himself, even as he is pure. That hope which is like an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, and entering into that within the vail, never flourishes in a barren soil.

If you live thoughtless and secure here, you must not expect to reign with Christ hereafter. You cannot go from Delilah's lap of carnal ease, to Abraham's

bosom of happy repose. As you are expecting an open and abundant entrance to be administered unto you into the kingdom of heaven; you must lead a life which will qualify you for the kingdom of heaven. The ungodly do not expect to be crowned with glory. They live without hope and without God in the world. But believers are the expectants of a glorious and a happy immortality. Let your present life and conversation be suitable to your prospects of future advancement at the right hand of the majesty on high, when you shall be crowned with glory, honor, and immortality. You cannot lead a vicious, unholy life and receive the rewards of the blessed. It was impossible for Balaam to die the death of the righteous, or to have his last end like his, when he had been a diviner, a heathen soothsayer, and a worshiper of false Gods. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Though holiness be what a sinner despises, it is that, which a saviour crowns. If you would be crowned, so run that ye may obtain. Lay aside every weight and the sin which does most easily beset you, and run with patience the race which is set before you, looking unto Jesus Christ. If you neglect to run the race of holiness here, you will certainly lose the crown of blessedness hereafter. Every tree that beareth not good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. You may perish for being servants that are unprofitable, as well as for being servants that are abominable. How constant, how diligent, ought believers to be in duty, when they are assured by infallible testimony that their labor is not in vain in the Lord.

If you who profess religion do no more than others, you certainly can expect no more in the eternal world. If you love them that love you, what reward have you? It is nothing but mere nature to *give*, where you expect again to *receive*. True religion teaches you to bless them that curse you, to do good to them that hate you, and to pray for them which dispitefully

use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Publicans so? If you would not have God put you off with a Pharisee's recompence, do not put off God with a Pharasee's performance.

8thly Believers are bound to do more than others, because they have a perfect pattern set for their imitation. They are required to be conformed in all things to Christ the Redeemer, to be perfect as he is perfect.

Christ is the standard of moral excellency to which all his followers are bound to conform. He is the root on which the saint grows, and the rule by which he is to square all his actions. It pleased him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect. Christ lived to teach you how to live, and died to teach you how to die. His words are, 'For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done. Glorious example! Worthy of the Blessed Redeemer who gave it---worthy of the imitation of all christians.

My christian brethren; attend to the heavenly precepts which proceeded from his lips; to that perfect conduct which appeared in his life. It should be your greatest delight to yield obedience to his requirements, to be holy in both heart and life. You should be as willing to be ruled by his laws, as to be saved by his grace. If you would reign with him in glory, you must take up your cross and follow him through life.

IMPROVEMENT.

1st. While attending to this subject, I make no doubt, but the sinner has been flattering himself with the idea, that, it furnishes him with an excuse for his neglect of religion. It may have been the language of his heart. 'I am glad to hear it thus publicly acknowledged, that christians are bound to do more than others: they have indeed a burden lying upon them, of which I rejoice that I am free: While they are tied up to rigid rules, and obliged by their profession to lead the rigid, and austere life, which has been described, I am not shackled with these restrictions, but may live as I list.

But suffer me O sinner, to reply to you, that if what has now been said pointing out the obligations of Christians to holy living, has afforded any food to your guilty mind, it is not more substantial, than the husks on which the prodigal fed before he was brought to a sense of his situation. It is the plain truth, that you are under the most indispensible obligations to immediately become a christian, and to lead the very life which the godly man leads. No plea, or excuse which you can frame, can free you from this solemn obligation; and every moment which you delay to become a hearty penitant and a true follower of the lamb; you are hazarding your eternal all. You are in a most awful manner aggravating your eternal condemnation. How gloriously will the justice of God soon shine in your utter destruction, unless you immediately flee for refuge and lay hold on Jesus Christ by a true and living faith.

2dly. Learn hence that a christian's life is a life of activity. A sleepy, lifeless christian, is a stumbling block to the wicked. Hear what the Lord says of the Laodicean Church. 'And unto the Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write, These things saith the Amen, the faitful and the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works that

thou art neither cold nor hot; so then because thou art lukewarm and art neither cold nor hot; I will spue thee out of my mouth.' The religion of heaven gives no toleration to spiritual sluggishness. The direction is—Awake thou that sleepest, and call upon thy God. Can you who have had your hearts warmed by divine grace, be cold and inactive? Can you who by the distinguishing mercy of God, have been led to see something of the value of that salvation which is brought to light in the gospel, be always silent on this sublime, this interesting theme? Can you who expect at the close of this short life to receive a crown of glory, neglect to run with patience the race set before you! Can you, who have dedicated yourselves unreservedly to God, sink back into the beggarly elements of the world, and give the wicked occasion to say, that religion is but an empty name! Brethren, shut the mouth of the wicked by your holy lives and conversation. Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your father who is in heaven.

3dly. We infer from the subject, that it is the duty of christians, seriously to consider, whether they live in character: for each individual, to often put the inquiry to his own heart, *do I more than others*?

Am I any more exemplary and circumspect in my outward walk? Do I pay a more strict observance to the sabbath, to public worship, to prayer? Am I more faithful in my family, in instructing my children and in training them up for God? And farther; do I differ from others in the exercises of my heart? Am I more meek, more humble, more submissive to the dispensations of providence? Do I hate sin, as it tends to dishonor God, and is a thing which his soul hateth? Or rather; am I not buried in the vain, trifling, wicked pursuits of the world? Am I not ready to lay aside the character of the christian and to join with the wicked, in trifling, in vain jest-

ing, in sinful amusements, and thus extinguish the light which I ever ought to hold up? When I hear others treating serious things with ridicule and derision, am I not found joining with them, rather than reproving them for their impiety and presumption? After having solemnly covenanted in the presence of Almighty God, angles and men, that I would live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world, that I would walk in all the ordinances and innstitutions of the Lord blameless; and that I would keep myself unspotted from the world, what account shall I have to give to my God, in the great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed! Will not those of my fellow mortals, who by my wicked and unholy life have been emboldened to sin, and induced to walk in the broad way to ruin, rise up as swift witnesses against me in the day of final retribution? How awfully wretched will be our eternal existence, if while we have by solemn profession engaged under Christ, we shall all our life time have been in the service of Satan, and finally be rejected of God with this solemn denunciation, 'Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

THE APPROPRIATE DUTY AND ORNAMENT OF THE FEMALE SEX.

A SERMON

BY,

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Acts ix.

Ver. 36. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which, by interpretation, is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.

37. And it came to pass in those days that she was sick, and died: whom, when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

39. Then Peter arose, and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

40. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed; and turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter she sat up.

41. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

SACRED history differs from profane, in a variety of important particulars. The latter is chiefly employed in exhibiting the struggles of ambition, the triumphs of power, and the glare of blood-stained honours; the former dwells more on the duties of private life, and especially on the meek, humble, and retiring graces of the Christian. The one presents a splendid, but not always faithful picture, which is calculated to indulge curiosity, and to flatter pride;

the other unfolds the heart; displays its character in all the simplicity and correctness of truth; and sets before us examples proper for the imitation of every age and sex, and condition of mankind.

The portion of sacred history before us comprises, within a very small compass, much matter for reflection. It exhibits a character, and a train of circumstances, from which we may at all times learn a variety of important lessons.

There was residing *at Joppa*, a sea-port town on the Mediterranean, about thirty-four miles northwest from Jerusalem, *a certain woman named Tabitha, which by interpretation, is called Dorcas.* The former of these names is a Syriac word, signifying a *roe* or *fawn:* the latter a Greek word, of the same import. This woman was a *disciple.* That is, she had embraced the gospel, and lived under its power. Her religion did not consist merely in *calling Christ Lord, Lord.* She testified the sincerity of her faith by a holy life and conversation. She *was full of good works, and of alms-deeds which she did.*

But the most sincere and exemplary piety is no defence against the attacks of disease and death. All die, because all have sinned. *It came to pass, therefore, in those days,* that is, when the apostle *Peter* was preaching in *Lydda*, a neighboring town, that *Dorcas* was taken *sick and died.* Immediately after her death, the pious widows, and other disciples, who had attended her during her illness, having taken a decent and respectful care of the corpse, dispatched messengers to the apostle, entreating him to come to them without delay. Whether they anticipated his raising their departed friend from the dead, or only expected him to attend the funeral, and to comfort them under their bereavement, we have scarcely ground even to conjecture. At any rate, in sending for the apostle, they manifested at once, their attachment and respect for the deceased, and a taste for his evangelical instruction and conversation.

I know scarcely any thing in this world, more desirable, or more gratifying, than the friendship, the consolations, and the kind offices of the pious; and especially in the day of trial, and at the hour of death. At seasons of this kind, the gay and the worldly are apt to fly from us. But even if they give us their presence, what will it avail? Alas! *miserable comforters are they all!* What can they tell us of that Gospel which hath poured eternal day on "the night of the grave;" or of that *Blood which cleanseth from all sin?* What can they tell us of the *exceeding great and precious promises*—of *everlasting consolation*—and of a *good hope through grace*? When my last hour is come, let pious friends surround my bed! Let those who fear God, and have an interest at the throne of grace, direct my trembling aspirations to Jesus, the friend of sinners! Let pious hands close my eyes! And let *devout men carry me*, like *Stephen, to my burial!*

The holy apostle on receiving the summons, entered immediately into the spirit of that pious friendship which had called him, and followed the messengers without delay. When he came to the dwelling which had been lately adorned with the piety and the active beneficence of *Dorcas*, he found her lifeless remains lying in *an upper chamber*, and surrounded with mourning widows. On his entering the apartment, they gathered about him, *weeping and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.* It is probable from the tenor of the narrative, that these pious widows had been themselves the objects of her *alms-deeds;* and that the *coats* and other *garments* with which they were then clothed, had been made by the hands, and bestowed by the bounty of their deceased benefactor. These they showed to the apostle, as testimonies of her benevolent character, and as causes for lamenting her departure. Simple, but touching and elegant eulo-

gium ! O how much more precious to the ingenuous mind, to be embalmed in the memory of the virtuous and the wise, than to be commemorated by the sculptured marble, or the massy pyramid ! How much better than all the blaze of heraldry, or " pomp of power," to have it said concerning us, when we are gone —" There lies one who fed me when I was hungry; who clothed me when I was naked ; who enlightened my mind with heavenly knowledge, and pointed to me the path of life eternal."

The apostle having witnessed those tears, and contemplated these memorials, requested the mourners to withdraw, that he might avoid all appearance of ostentation in the miracle which he was about to perform ; and that he might with more perfect freedom pour out his soul in prayer. When they had retired, *he kneeled down and prayed ; and, turning him to the body, said Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes ; and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up ; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.*

Who can describe the surprise and joy of the attendants at seeing their amiable friend restored to life and usefulness ? Above all, who can describe the mingled emotions of regret and pleasure, which must have filled the mind of *Dorcas*, to find herself brought back to a world which she had supposed herself to have for ever quitted ; and again united to companions whom she had expected never to see more until they should join her in the paradise of God ? I dare not attempt the task. Leaving, therefore, this topic of meditation, which however deeply interesting, cannot subserve any important practical purpose,—

I hasten to employ the example of this excellent woman as the basis of some very brief and general remarks on the APPROPRIATE DUTY AND ORNAMENT OF THE FEMALE SEX.

And here I shall not stop to enquire, whether the

native character of the female mind is, in all respects, precisely the same with that of the other sex. Whatever opinion may be formed on this subject, I take for granted, we shall all agree, that Women ought not to be considered as destined to the same employments with Men; and, of course, that there is a species of education, and a sphere of action, which more particularly belong to them. There was a time indeed, when a very different doctrine had many advocates, and appeared to be growing popular:---viz. that in conducting education, and in selecting employments, all distinctions of sex ought to be forgotten and confounded; and that females are as well fitted to fill the academic Chair, to shine in the Senate, to adorn the Bench of justice, and even to lead the train of War, as the more hardy sex. This delusion, however, is now generally discarded. It begins to be perceived, that the God of nature has raised everlasting barriers against such wild and mischievous speculations; and that to urge them, is to renounce reason, to contradict experience, to trample on the divine authority, and to degrade the usefulness, the honor, and the real enjoyments of the female sex.

But an error of an *opposite* kind has gained a lamentable currency in the world. This is, that the station of females is so humble, and their sphere of duty so extremely limited, that they neither *can*, nor *ought* to aspire to extensive usefulness. This is the mistake of indolence, or of false humility; and is as plainly contradicted by reason, by scripture, and by experience, as the extreme before mentioned. While females are shut out by the express authority of God from some offices, and by the common sense of mankind from others; there is yet open to them an immense field for the most dignified activity, in which they may glorify God, render essential service to society, and gain everlasting honor to themselves.

We often have occasion from the sacred desk, to exhibit in contrast, the representations of scripture,

and the sentiments of a depraved world. This contrast seldom appears in a stronger light than it does on the subject of which we are now speaking. In the codes of modern infidelity and licentiousness, as well as among uncivilized nations, woman is exhibited as the mere servile instrument of convenience or pleasure. In the volume of Revelation she is represented as the equal, the companion, and the help-meet of man. In the language of worldly taste, a fine woman, is one who is distinguished for her personal charms, and polite accomplishments. In the language of Scripture, she is the enlightened and virtuous mistress of a family, and the useful member of society. The woman who is formed on the principles of the world, finds no enjoyment but in the circles of affluence, gayety, and fashion. The woman who is formed on the principles of the Bible *goeth about doing good:* she *visiteth the fartherless and the widows in their affliction: she stretcheth forth her hands to the poor, yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.* The one dresses with elegance, and shines in the dance: the other *opens her mouth with wisdom; in her tongue is the law of kindness*, and her most valued adorning is not *gold*, or *pearls, or costly array; but good works, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.* The hours of the one are divided between routs, and assemblies, and visiting, and theatres, and cards: the other *looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.* "The business of the one is pleasure; the pleasure of the other is business. The one is admired abroad; the other is beloved and honored at home." *Her children rise up and call her blessed: her husband also, and he praiseth her. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.*

From these representations of sacred writ, and from many others of similar import, it is manifest, that the ornament and the duty of the female sex, are as appropriate as they are important; and that they

pertain especially to the relations which they bear as wives,—as mothers,—as domestic companions, and as members of society. On each of these relations, an extensive field of enquiry opens to our view; but it is only possible to take a very rapid glance at each, in the order in which they have been mentioned.

I. How interesting and important are the duties devolved on females as WIVES! On their temper and deportment, more than those of any other individuals, it depends, whether their husbands be happy or miserable; whether the households over which they preside be well ordered and regular, or neglected and wretched; whether the property of their partners be wisely and economically applied, or carelessly and ignobly squandered; in a word, whether peace, affection, order, and plenty, reign in their dwellings, or waste, confusion, discord, and alienation disgrace them. Females have been often honored with the title of *angels.* If it be ever proper to apply such an appellation to a daughter of a fallen race, there is surely no mortal to whom it so properly applies, as a prudent, virtuous, and amiable wife, the counsellor and friend of her husband; who makes it her daily study to lighten his cares, to sooth his sorrows, and to augment his joys; who like a guardian angel, watches over his interests, warns him against dangers, comforts him under trials; and by her pious, assiduous, and attractive deportment, constantly endeavors to render him more virtuous, more useful, more honored and more happy. The blessings which such a woman is capable of conferring on her partner, and through him, on society, are more numerous and diversified than a volume would be sufficient to display. In how many instances have we known wives of this character become the means of winning their unbelieving husbands to the obedience of the faith! When this is the case, who can estimate the greatness of the blessing? Like the light of day, it pours its benign

influence upon each member of the favored domestic circle; and ever permanent in its effects, reaches through eternal ages.

II. No less numerous and weighty are the duties devolved on females as MOTHERS. Children, during the first years of their lives, are necessarily committed almost entirely to the care of mothers. And the impressions which are then made on their tender minds, generally decide their character and destiny, not only for this life, but also for that which is to come. In that soft and plastic season, when the temper, the principles and the habits are formed; when the heart is deeply impressed; when the conscience is tender, when the whole character is ductile; when almost every thing but the regeneration of the heart may be said to be within the power of a parent to bestow; and when even the attainment of this greatest of all gifts has a closer connection with parental faithfulness than is generally imagined---This is empathatically, the period of the maternal empire. Her's is the delightful, the all-important task, to watch over the infant years of her offspring; to guard them from the thousand dangers to which they are exposed; to form a sound mind in a sound body; to whisper in their listening ears, the sentiments of virtue and piety; and to prepare them for living to God, to their country, and to themselves.

On this ground, I have no scruple in avowing my conviction, that in the whole business of education, THE MOTHER IS THE MORE IMPORTANT PARENT. It may, perhaps, without extravagance be said, that to the female sex pre-eminently belongs the mighty task, so far as it depends on human agency, of forming the heads and hearts of the great mass of mankind. To them it belongs to render their families the nurseries either of heaven or hell. Their enlightened fidelity or their criminal negligence, will, under God, decide the character of those future citizens, on whose virtues

the whole interests of the commonwealth will depend; of those legislators on whose wisdom the character of our laws must rest; of those magistrates, with whose learning and correct principles the whole fabrick of public justice must stand or fall; and of those ministers of the gospel, on whose orthodoxy and piety the salvation of millions, speaking after the manner of men, may be suspended. It is thus that maternal faithfulness or negligence goes to the root of social happiness. It is thus that mothers may be the means of transmitting blessings or calamities, of incalculable extent, to distant generations.

III. EVERY DOMESTIC RELATION which females sustain, may be considered as opening to them an appropriate and important sphere of duty. Great and permanent usefulness in domestic life is by no means confined to wives and mothers. The female who sustains neither of these honorable and interesting relations, may yet be eminently useful. How much may every *Daughter*, by uniformly dutiful and affectionate conduct towards her parents, promote the happiness of the whole household to which she belongs; and by her example contribute to the improvement of all around her! How much solid good may every *Sister* daily accomplish, by diligently employing her talents, in assisting to educate her younger brothers and sisters, in promoting the regularity, order, and comfort of the family, of which she is a member, and in recommending at once, by her whole deportment, the wisdom of economy, the sweetness of benevolence, and the purity of holinsss? Nay, how much may every female *servant* contribute to the advantage of the family in which her lot is cast! It was a *little maid* in the house of *Naaman*, the Syrian, that directed her master to the prophet of the Lord, by whom his leprosy was healed, and by whose ministry he became a convert to the true religion.

And were the history of many families laid open to our view, how often should we see the pious language and holy example of some inferior domestic made a blessing to more than one of those whom she served!

Every female, then, who, in whatever capacity, makes a part of any domestic establishment, whether she preside as its head, or serve as its humblest menial, has it in her power to do good, to an extent which it is the prerogative of Omniscience alone to estimate. She has means and opportunities of usefulness peculiar to her sex and station. Means and opportunities which, if faithfully improved, cannot fail, according to the divine promise, to produce a rich result of blessing. The tongue of eloquence indeed may never pronounce her eulogium, nor the pen of history record her deeds. But in the 'heraldry of heaven,' in which to be good is better than to be great, and to be useful than to shine, she may hold a place more illustrious and honorable than many of those who have wielded the sceptre of empire, and filled the world with the thunder of their fame.

IV. Females have set before them a wide and appropriate field of useful activity, AS MEMBERS OF SOCIETY. Let no woman imagine that she has nothing to do beyond the sphere of her own household. In every walk, and in every hour of life, she may be contributing something to the purity, the order, and the happiness of the community to which she belongs. The influence of the female character in forming public taste, and public manners, is incalculable. It has been felt and acknowledged in all ages. Of this influence, every woman, whatever be her talents or her station, possesses a share; and by her whole deportment is conferring either a benefit or an injury on society. It is in the power of women, by constantly exhibiting the dignity of virtue, and the attractions of piety, to repress the impertinence, to

polish the roughness, and to frown out of sight, and, in many instances, out of existence, the vices of the other sex. It is in the power of women, by example and by precept, to regulate at pleasure the decorums of dress, the purity of manners, and all the habits, of the younger and more inexperienced part of their own sex. In short, it is in the power of women, to an extent to which few of them seem to be aware, to discountenance and banish those pernicious customs which, from time to time, display their hydra form in society, and to exercise a most efficient guardianship over public taste and virtue. No false sentiments can have much prevalence against which *they* resolutely set their faces. No corrupt practices can be general or popular which *they* are willing to expel from society.

'Human happiness,' says a modern writer, 'is on the whole, much less affected by great, but unfrequent events, whether of prosperity or of adversity, of benefit or of injury, than by small, but perpetually recurring incidents of good or evil. The manner in which the influence of the female character is felt, belongs to the latter description. It is not like the periodical inundation of a river, which once in a year, overspreads a desert with transient plenty. It is like the dew of heaven, which descends at all seasons, returns after short intervals, and permanently nourishes every herb of the field*."

To the female sex also properly appertains a large portion of those offices of charity, to which we are constantly called. To feed the hungry, and clothe the naked; to *weep with them that weep;* to soften the bed of sickness, and to wipe away the tears of sorrow, are duties incumbent upon us all. But they belong, more particularly to the tender sex. They are best acquainted with domestic wants. They are

* Gisborne. *Duties of the Female Sex.* p. 8.

the best judges of domestic character. They have more sympathy, more tenderness, more leisure, and more patience than men; and, on a variety of accounts, are more capable of performing these duties with ease to themselves, and with advantage to the objects of their charity.

Here is surely enough to excite all the ambition, and to employ all the talents of a reasonable mind. What though females cannot stand in the sacred Desk, nor sit on the Bench of justice? What though they cannot be employed in framing laws, nor in conducting diplomatic missions, nor in organizing or governing nations? They can contribute more by their virtues and their influence to bind society together, than all the laws that legislators ever formed. They are called to duties which are not only worthy of the most exalted powers; but which have this preeminent advantage, that, while they are immediately calculated to meliorate the hearts of those who perform them, they also tend to refine and elevate the human character in general, and to render earth more like the paradise of God.

The foregoing hints, if they do not satisfactorily elucidate the subject to which they relate, will at least suffice to show its importance; and to prepare the way for some remarks more immediately practical. To these permit me now to request your attention.

1 Let me apply this subject, by inferring from what has been said, the *unspeakable importance of female education*. If the female character be so important, then the formation of that character must be equally so. If education in general lie at the foundation of individual, domestic, and national happiness, this is especially the case with female education. It is a concern in which the highest interests of mankind are at stake. It involves the vital principle of social welfare. And according as it is at-

tended to or neglected; according as it is wisely or erroneously pursued, will public and private happiness be nourished or poisoned at its root. Upon the education of woman it depends, under God, whether she shall be the most useful, or the most mischievous of mortals; whether she shall be the most invaluable blessing of human society, or 'the most dreadful scourge of Almighty visitation.' Solemn thought! How deeply ought the subject to engage the attention, to interest the heart, to excite the prayers, and to animate the diligence of every parent!

We are, perhaps, wiser than our fathers, in having learned to appreciate more justly than they did, the talents of women, and in devising plans of education better fitted to develope and improve these talents. But I am afraid we fall below our venerable predecessors, in cultivating the moral and religious character of females, and in fitting them for some of the more useful and important duties of their sex. When we learn generally to correct this error; when we teach our daughters properly to estimate their true dignity, and diligently to pursue their real happiness; when we persuade them to reflect, that education consists, not in the acquisition of dazzling and meretricious arts; but in preparing themselves to be respectable and useful as wives, mothers, members of society, and christians—Then, and not till then, may we hope to see the moral character of society raised, and the real importance of the female sex more justly estimated, and more duly honored.

2. Allow me to apply this subject by *recommending the character which has been drawn, to the studious imitation of the female part of my audience, and espicially of the younger class.* Contracted in its extent, and feeble in its outline, as is the sketch which I have attempted to exhibit, believe me, it is worthy of your attention. It is a character which involves the highest honor, and which embraces its own reward. In re-

commending it to your imitation, therefore, I am pleading the cause of your own elevation and happiness, as well as the cause of God, and the cause of mankind.

My young female friends! it ought to be your ambition to possess and to evince a sound understanding, and a respectable portion of literary knowledge. All that has been said, serves to show that the cultivation of female intellect is as important, and as necessary, as the intellectual culture of the other sex. But it ought to be *more especially* your ambition, to cultivate your *hearts*. The *Heart*—I repeat it—the *Heart*—sanctified by religion, warmed and softened by benevolence, and taught to throb in affectionate response to every sigh of suffering, and every claim of humanity—this is the grand ornament of woman—this is the strong hold of woman. To be so many *Tabithas*, adorning the doctrine of God, your Saviour, and diffusing happiness among all around you, would be infinitely more to your honor as well as your comfort, even in the present life, than to stand in the list of those masculine females, who, while they gain a proud civil pre-eminence, really disgrace their sex.

When therefore, I see a young female devoting her supreme attention to external accomplishments; absorbed in the love of ornament, and of admiration; habitually venturing, in obedience to fashion, to the *very verge of decorum*; never satisfied but when either preparing for the splendor of a public appearance, or discussing the merits of a past exhibition—I say within myself---The hand of some infatuated parent, or of some incompetent or unfaithful guardian is here. What perversion of talents! What misapplication of exertions! What waste of time! What pains to treasure up sorrow and tears for after life! How much more attractive would be that fair form, were it employed in works of charity, and more frequently seen bending over the couch of poverty and suffering!

How much more beautiful would be that lovely face, were it habitually beaming with benevolence and piety! And how unspeakably more happy, and more respectable its possessor, if the cultivation of her heart, and the employment of her time, on evangelical principles, were the great object of her care!

Let the young, let females of all ages, be induced to consider the duties incumbent upon them in their respective situations in life. A sphere of action is assigned you by your Creator, and you are capable of being eminently useful in the age in which you live. Your exertions are calculated not merely to relieve present disstress, but to improve the condition of society, to cultivate the hearts of the young, and confer blessings on generations yet unborn. How great the satisfaction, how exquisite the pleasure of doing good, of adding to the sum of human happiness! "What is there in all the pageantry of state, in all the gratifications of sense, in all the delirious joys of giddy dissipation, once to be compared with this? O pleasures cheaply purchased, placidly enjoyed; ever rising, ever new; never languid, never remorseful, why are you pursued so seldom, and attained by so few?"*

Brethren! *the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away.* Like *Dorcas*, we must all soon sicken and die. Are we habitually anticipating the solemnities of that hour? Are we daily directing our pursuits, employing our property, and framing our lives, agreeably to this anticipation? Do we resemble the excellent Woman, on whose example we have been meditating, in our character and hopes, as well as in our mortality? We cannot resemble her, unless we are *disciples* indeed. We may 'give all our goods to feed the poor,' and 'our bodies to be burned,' and yet be nothing more than 'a sounding brass,

* Hunter's *Occasional Sermons*, II. p. 140.

and a tinkling cymbal.' But those deeds of charity which spring from a living faith in a living Redeemer; those works of obedience which are performed from a principle of love for his name;---these are 'the good works, and the alms-deeds,' which shed a lustre around the bed of death, and upon which, in a dying hour, we may look back with holy satisfaction, with heavenly joy:---not as the ground of our confidence; not as the price of pardon; not as our title to everlasting life:---no; the righteousness of 'Him, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God,' is the only foundation of a sinner's hope: but as means by which a Divine Saviour has enabled us to glorify the riches of his grace; as the fruits of his blessed Spirit; as evidences of a vital union to his body; and as pledges of admission to the glories of his presence.

May that God, who has declared himself the 'Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow, in his holy habitation,' fill us all with the spirit and the consolations of his children, enable us to imitate his holy benevolence, and prepare us, in due time, for his heavenly kingdom! And to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, be all the praise, both now and ever! Amen!

MESSIAH'S THRONE.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY 1802.

BY

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HEB. i. viii.

But unto the Son he saith, Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever.

IN the all important argument which occupies this epistle, Paul assumes, what the believeing Hebrews had already professed, that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah. To prepare them for the consequences of their own principle; a principle involving nothing less than the abolition of their law, the subversion of their state, the ruin of their city, the final extinction of their carnal hopes, he leads them to the doctrine of their Redeemer's person in order to explain the nature of his offices, to evince the value of his rpiritual salvation, and to shew in both, the accomplishment of their œconomy which was 'now ready to vanish away.' Under no apprehension of betraying the unwary into idolatrous homage by giving to the Lord Jesus greater glory than is 'due unto his name;' the apostle sets out with ascribing to him excellence and attributes which belong to no

creature. Creatures of most elvated rank are introduced; but it is to display, by contrast, the pre-eminence of Him who is 'the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.' Angels are great in might and in dignity; but 'unto *them* hath he not put in subjection the world to come. 'Unto which of *them* said he, at any time, Thou art my son?' To which of *them*, 'Sit thou at my right hand?' He saith they are spirits, '*ministering* spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who are the Heirs of salvation,' *But unto the* SON, in a style which annihilates competition and comparison, *unto the* SON he saith, *thy throne*, O GOD, *is forever and ever.*

Brethren, if the majesty of Jesus is the subject which the Holy Ghost selected for the encouragement and consolation of his people, when he was shaking the earth and the heavens, and diffusing his gospel among the nations; can it be otherwise than suitable and precious to us on this occasion? Shall it not expand our views, and warm our hearts, and nerve our arm, in our efforts to exalt his fame? Let me implore then, the aid of your prayers; but far more importunately the aids of his own Spirit, while I speak of 'the things which concern the king:' those great things contained in the text—his personal glory—his sovereign rule.—

I. His *personal glory* shines forth in the name by which he is revealed; a name above every name, THY *throne*---O GOD!

To the single eye nothing can be more evident, in the

First place, than that the Holy Ghost here asserts the *eessential deity* of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of his enemies, whom he will 'make his footstool,' some have, indeed, controverted this position, and endeavoured to blot out the text from the catalogue of his witnesses. Instead of 'thy throne, O God;' they

would compel us, by a perversion of phraseology, of figure, and of sense, to read, 'God is thy throne;' converting the great and dreadful God into a symbol of authority in one of his own creatures. The scriptures, it seems, may utter contradictions or impiety, but the divinity of the Son they shall not attest. The crown however, which 'flourishes on his head,' is not to be torn away; nor the anchor of our hope to be wrested from us, by the rude hand of licentious criticism.

I cannot find, in the lively oracles, a single distinctive mark of deity which is not applied, without reserve or limitation, to the only begotten Son. 'All things that the Father hath are *his*.' *Who* is that mysterious Word that was 'in the *beginning*, with God?' *Who* is the 'Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending; the first and the last; the Almighty?' *Who* is he that 'knows what is in man,' because he searches the deep and dark recesses of the heart? *Who* is or the Omnipresent, that has promised, 'Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?' the light of whose countenance is, at the same moment, the joy of heaven and the salvation of earth; who is encircled by the Seraphim on high, and 'walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks;' who is in this assembly; in all the assemblies of his people; in every worshipping family; in every closet of prayer; in every holy heart. 'Whose' hands have stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth? *Who* hath replenished them with inhabitants, and garnished them with beauty; having created all things that are in both, 'visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers?' By *Whom* do 'all things consist?' *Who* is 'the governor among the nations, having on his vesture and on his thigh a name written 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords.' *Whom* is it the Father's will that

'all men should honor, even as they honor himself?' *Whom* has he commanded his angels to worship? *whom* to obey? Before *whom* do the devils tremble? *Who* is qualified to redeem millions of sinners 'from the wrath to come,' and preserve them, by his grace, to his everlasting kingdom? *Who* raiseth the dead, in trespasses and sins, 'having life in himself, to quicken whom he will,' at *whose* voice shall all that are in their graves 'come forth; and death and hell' surrender their numerous and forgotten captives? *Who* shall weigh, in the balance of Judgment, the destinies of angels and men? dispose of the thrones of paradise? and bestow eternal life? Shall I submit to the decision of reason? Shall I ask a response from heaven? Shall I summon the devils from their 'chains of darkness?' The response from heaven sounds in my ears; reason approves, and the devils confess---This, O Christians, is none other than the GREAT GOD our SAVIOUR!

Indeed my brethren, the doctrine of our Lord's divinity is not, as a *fact*, more interesting to our faith, than, as a *principle*, it is essential to our hope. If he were not 'the true God,' he could not be 'eternal life.' When pressed down by guilt and languishing for happiness, I look around for a deliverer such as my conscience and my heart and the word of God assure me I need, insult not my agony by directing me to a creature---to a man, a mere man like myself! A creature! a man! My Redeemer owns my *person*. My immortal spirit is his *property*. When I come to die, I must commit it into his hands. My soul! My infinitely precious soul committed to a mere man! become the property of a mere man! I would not thus, entrust my *body* to the highest angel in heaven. It is only the 'Father of spirits,' that can have *property* in spirits, and be their refuge in the hour of transition from the present to the approaching world. In short the divinity of Jesus, is in the

system of grace, the sun to which all its parts are subordinate, and all their stations refer---which binds them in sacred concord; and imparts to them their radiance, and life, and vigor. Take from it this central luminary, and the glory is departed---Its holy harmonies are broken---The elements rush to chaos ---The light of salvation is extinguished for ever!

But it is not the deity of the Son, simply considered, to which the text confines our attention. We are in the

Second place to contemplate it as subsisting in a personal union with the human nature.

Long before this epistle was written had he 'by himself purged our sins, and sat down at the right hand of majesty on high.' It is, therefore, as 'God manifested in the flesh;' as my own brother, while he is 'the express image of the Father's person,' as the Mediator of the new covenant, that he is seated on the throne. Of this throne, to which the pretensions of a creature were mad and blasphemous, the majesty is, indeed, maintained by his divine power; but the foundation is laid in his Meditorial character. I need not prove to this audience, that all his gracious offices and all his redeeming work originated in the love and the election of his Father. Obedient to that will, which fully accorded with his own, he came down from heaven; tabernacled in our clay; was 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs;' submitted to the 'contradictions of sinners;' the temptations of the old Serpent, and the wrath of an avenging God. In the merit of his obedience which threw a lustre round the divine law; and in the atonement of his death by which he offered 'himself a sacrifice without spot unto God,' repairing the injuries of man's rebellion, expiating sin through the blood of his cross; and conciliating its pardon with infinite purity, and unalterable truth; summarily, in his performing those conditions on which was suspended all

God's mercy to man, and all man's enjoyment of God, in these stupendous 'works of righteousness' are we to look for the cause of his present glory. 'He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' 'Exalted' thus, 'to be a Prince and a Saviour,' he fills heaven with his beauty, and obtains from its blest inhabitants the purest and most reverential praise. 'Worthy,' cry the mingled voices of his angels and his redeemed, 'worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.' 'Worthy' again cry his redeemed, in a song which belongs not to the angels, but in which with holy ecstacy, we will join, 'worthy art thou, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.'

Delightful, brethren, transcendently delightful were it to dwell upon this theme. But we must refrain; and having taken a transient glance at our Redeemer's personal glory, let us turn to the

II. View which the text exhibits—the view of his *sovereign rule*——Thy THRONE, *O God is forever and ever.*

The mediatorial kingdom of Christ Jesus, directed and upheld by his divinity, is now the object of our contemplation. To advance Jehovah's glory in the salvation of men, is the purpose of its erection. The earth is the scene and human life the limit, of those great operations by which they are interested in its mercies, and prepared for its consummation; its principles, its provisions, its issues are eternal. When it rises up before us in all its grandeur of design, col-

lecting and conducting to the heavens of God, millions of immortals in comparison with the least of whom the destruction of the material universe were a thing of naught, whatever the carnal mind calls vast and magnificent, shrinks away into nothing.

But it is not so much the general nature of Messiah's kingdom on which I am to insist, as its *stability*, its *administration*, and the *prospects* which they open to the *church of God*.

Messiah's throne is not one of those airy fabricks which are reared by vanity and overthrown by Time: it is fixed of old: it is stable and cannot be shaken, for

(1.) It is the throne of God. He who sitteth on it is the Omnipotent. Universal being is in his hand. Revolution, force, fear, as applied to his kingdom, are words without meaning. Rise up in rebellion, if thou hast courage. Associate with thee the whole mass of infernal power. Begin with the ruin of whatever is fair and good in this little globe---Pass from hence to pluck the Sun out of his place---and roll the volume of dessolation through the starry world ---What hast thou done unto him? It is the puny menace of a worm against Him whose frown is perdition. 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.'

(2.) With the stability which Messiah's Godhead communicates to his throne, let us connect the stability resulting from his Father's covenant.

His throne is founded not merely in strength, but in right. God hath laid the government upon the shoulder of his holy child Jesus, and set him upon mount Zion as his king forever. He has promised, and sworn to 'build up his throne to all generations;' to 'make it endure as the days of heaven;' to 'beat down his foes before his face,' and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness' adds he, 'and my mercy shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. Hath he said it? And will he not do it?

Hath he spoken it, and shall it not come to pass? Whatever disappointments rebuke the visionary projects of men, or the more crafty schemes of Satan, 'the counsel of the Lord, *that* shall stand.' The blood of sprinkling, which sealed all the promises made to Messiah, and binds down his father's faithfulness to their accomplishment, witnesses continually in the heavenly sanctuary. 'He must,' therefore, 'reign till he have put all his enemies under his feet.' And although the dispensation of his authority shall, upon this event, be changed; and he shall deliver it up, in its present form, to the Father, he shall still remain, in his substantial glory, 'a priest upon his throne,' to be the eternal bond of our union, and the eternal medium of our fellowship, with the living God.

Seeing that the throne of our king is as immoveable as it is exalted, let us 'with joy draw water out of that well of salvation' which is opened to us in the *Administration* of his kingdom. Here we must consider *its general characters*, and the *means* by which it operates.

The general characters which I shall illustrate, are the following.

(1.) *Mystery*---He is the unsearchable God, and his government must be like himself. *Facts* concerning both he has graciously revealed. These we must admit upon the credit of his own testimony; with these we must satisfy our wishes, and limit our inquiry. 'To intrude into those things which he hath not seen' because God has not disclosed them, whether they relate to his arrangements for this world or the next, is the arrogance of one 'vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.' There are secrets in our Lord's procedure which he will not explain to us in this life, and which may not, perhaps, be explained in the life to come. We cannot tell how he makes evil the minister of good: how he combines physical and moral agencies of different kind and order, in the

production of blessings. We cannot so much as conjecture what bearings the system of redemption, in every part of its process, may have upon the relations of the universe; nor even what may be all the connections of providence in the occurrences of this moment, or of the last. 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for us: it is high, we cannot attain it.' Our Sovereign's 'way is in the sea, and his path in the deep waters; and his footsteps are not known.' When, therefore, we are surrounded with difficulty; when we cannot unriddle his conduct in particular dispensations, we must remember that he is God; that we are to 'walk by faith;' and to trust him as implicitly when we are in the 'valley of the shadow of death,' as when his 'candle shines upon our heads.' We must remember that it is not for us to be admitted into the cabinet of the King of Kings; that creatures constituted as we are could not sustain the view of his unveiled agency; that it would confound, and scatter, and annihilate our little intellects. As often, then, as he retires from our observation, blending goodness with majesty, let us lay our hands upon our mouths and worship. This stateliness of our king can afford us no just ground of uneasiness. On the contrary it contributes to our tranquility: For we know,

(2.) That if his administration is mysterious, it is also *wise*.

'Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite.' That infinite understanding watches over, and arranges, and directs all the affairs of his church and of the world. *We* are perplexed at every step; embarassed by opposition; lost in confusion; fretted by disappointment; and ready to conclude, in our haste, that all things are against our own good, and our Master's honor. But 'this is our infirmity;' it is the dictate of impatience and indiscretion. We forget the 'years of the right hand

of the Most High.' We are slow of heart in learning a lesson which shall soothe our spirits at the expence of our pride. We turn away from the consolation to be derived from believing that though we know not the connections and results of holy providence, our Lord Jesus knows them perfectly. With him there is no irregularity, no chance, no conjecture. Disposed, before his eye, in the most luminous and exquisite order, the whole series of events occupy the very place and crisis where they are most effectually to subserve the purposes of his love. Not a moment of time is wasted, nor a fragment of action misapplied. What he does, we do not, indeed, know at present, but so far as we shall be permitted to know hereafter, we shall see that his most inscrutable procedure was guided by consummate wisdom; that our choice was often as foolish as our petulance was provoking; that the success of our own wishes would have been our most painful chastisement; would have diminished our happiness, and detracted from his praise. Let us therefore, study to subject our ignorance to his knowledge; instead of prescribing, to obey; instead of questioning, to believe; to perform our part without that despondency which betrays a fear that our Lord may neglect his; and tacitly accuses him of a less concern than we feel for the glory of his own name. Let us not shrink from this duty as imposing too rigorous a condition upon our obedience, for a

(3.) Character of Messiah's administration is *righteousness.* 'The sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre.' If 'Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.' In the times of old his redeemed 'wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; but, nevertheless, he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.' He loves his church and the members of it too tenderly to lay

upon them any burdens, or expose them to any trials, which are not indispensible to their good. It is right for them to 'go through fire and through water,' that he may 'bring them out into a wealthy place,'—right to 'endure chastening,' that 'they may be partakers of his holiness'—right to 'have the sentence of death in themselves,' that they may 'trust in the living God, and that his strength may be perfected in their weakness.' It is right that he should 'endure with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:' that he should permit 'iniquity to abound, the love of many to wax cold,' and the dangers of his church to accumulate, till the interposition of his arm be necessary and decisive. In the day of final retribution not one mouth shall be opened to complain of injustice. It will be seen that 'the Judge of all the earth has done right; that the works of his hands have been verity and Judgment,' and done every one of them, in 'truth and uprightness.' Let us, then, think not only respectfully, but reverently of his dispensations, repress the voice of murmur, and rebuke the spirit of discontent; wait, in faith and patience, till he become his own interpreter, when 'the heavens shall declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.'

You will anticipate me in enumerating the *means* which Messiah employs in the administration of his kingdom.

(1.) The *Gospel;* of which himself, as an all-sufficient and condescending Saviour, is the great and affecting theme. Derided by the world it is, nevertheless, effectual to the salvation of them who believe. 'We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.' The doctrine of the cross connected with evangelical ordinances---the ministry of reconciliation; the

holy sabbath; the sacraments of his covenant: briefly, the whole system of instituted worship, is the 'rod of the Redeemer's strength' by which he subdues sinners to himself; rules even 'in the midst of his enemies;' exercises his glorious authority in his church, and exhibits a visible proof to men and angles, that he is King in Zion.

(2. The efficient means to which the gospel owes its success, and the name of Jesus its praise, is the *agency of the Holy Ghost*.

Christianity is 'the ministration of the Spirit.' All real and sanctifying knowledge of the truth and love of God is from his inspiration. It was the last, and best promise which the Saviour made to his afflicted disciples at the moment of parting, 'I will send the *Comforter*, the spirit of truth; He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and shew it unto you.' It is he 'who convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment'---who infuses resistless vigour into means otherwise weak and useless. 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God,' God the Spirit, 'to the pulling down of strong holds.' Without his benediction the ministry of an archangel would never 'convert one sinner from the error of his way.' But when he descends, with his lifegiving influence from God out of heaven, then 'foolish things of the world confound the wise; and weak things of the world confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, bring to nought things which are.' It is this ministration of the Spirit which renders the preaching of the gospel to 'men dead in trespasses and sins' a *reasonable* service. When I am set down in the 'valley of vision,' and view the bones, 'very many and very dry,' and am desired to try the effect of my own ability in recalling them to life, I fold my hands and stand mute in astonishment and despair.

But when the Lord God commands me to speak in HIS name, my closed lips shall be opened; when HE calls upon 'the breath from the four winds to breathe upon the slain that they may live,' I will prophesy without fear,—'O ye dry bones, Hear the word of the Lord,' and, obedient to his voice, they 'shall come together, bone to his bone; shall be covered with sinews and flesh:' shall receive new life: and 'stand up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.' In this manner, from the graves of nature and the dry bones of natural men, does the Holy Spirit recruit the armies of the living God:' and make them, collectively and individually, 'a name, and a praise, and a glory,' to the 'Captain of their salvation.'

(3.) Among the instruments which the Lord Jesus employs in the administration of his government are *the resources of the physical and moral world.*

Supreme in heaven and in earth, 'upholding all things by the word of his power,' the universe is his magazine of means. Nothing which acts or exists, is exempted from promoting, in its own place, the purposes of his kingdom. Beings rational and irrational; animate and inanimate; the heavens above and the earth below; the obedience of sanctified, and the disobedience of unsanctified men; all holy spirits; all damned spirits: in one word, every agency, every element, every atom, are but the ministers of his will, and concur in the execution of his designs. And this he will demonstrate to the confusion of his enemies, and the joy of his people, in that 'great and terrible day' when he 'shall sit upon the throne of his glory,' and dispense ultimate judgment to the quick and the dead.

Upon these hills of holiness, the stability of Messiah's Throne, and the perfect administration of his kingdom, let us take our station, and survey the

Prospects which rise up before the Church of God.

When I look upon the magnificent scene, I cannot repress the salutation, 'Hail thou that art highly favoured!'

She has the prospect of preservation, of increase, and of triumph.

(1.) The prospect of *preservation.*

The long existence of the Christian church would be pronounced, upon common principles of reasoning, impossible. She finds in every man a natural and inveterate enemy. To encounter and overcome the unanimous hostility of the world, she boasts no political stratagem, no disciplined legions, no outward coercion of any kind. Yet her expectation is that she live forever. To mock this hope, and to blot out her memorial from under heaven, the most furious efforts of fanaticism, the most ingenious arts of statesmen, the concentrated strength of empires, have been frequently and perseveringly applied. The blood of her sons and her daughters has streamed like water; the smoke of the scaffold and the stake, where they won the crown of martyrdom in the cause of Jesus, has ascended in thick volumes to the skies. The tribes of persecution have sported over her woes, and erected monuments, as they imagined, of her perpetual ruin. But where are her tyrants, and where their empires? the tyrants have long since gone to their own place; their names have descended upon the roll of infamy; their empires have passed, like shadows over the rock—they have successively disappeared, and left not a trace behind!

But what became of the church? She rose from her ashes fresh in beauty and might. Celestial glory beamed around her; she dashed down the monumental marble of her foes, and they who hated her fled before her, She has celebrated the funeral of kings and kingdoms that plotted her destruction; and, with the inscriptions of their pride, has transmitted to posterity the records of their shame. How

shall this phænomenon be explained? We are at the present moment, witnesses of the fact; but who can unfold the mystery. This blessed book, the book of truth and life, has made our wonder to cease. 'THE LORD HER GOD IN THE MIDST OF HER IS MIGHTY.' His presence is a fountain of health, and his protection a 'wall of fire.' He has betrothed her, in eternal covenant to himself. Her living head, in whom she lives, is above, and his quickening spirit shall never depart from her. Armed with divine virtue, his gospel, secret, silent, unobserved, enters the hearts of men and sets up an everlasting kingdom. It eludes all the vigilance, and baffles all the power of the adversary. Bars, and bolts, and dungeons are no obstacle to its approach: Bonds, and tortures, and death cannot extinguish its influence. Let no man's heart, tremble, then, because of fear. Let no man despair, in these days of rebuke and blasphemy of the Christian cause. The ark is launched, indeed, upon the floods; the tempest sweeps along the deep; the billows break over her on every side. But Jehovah-Jesus has promised to conduct her in safety to the haven of peace. She cannot be lost unless the pilot perish. Why then do the heathen rage, and and the people 'imagine a vain thing?' Hear, O Zion, the word of thy God, and rejoice for the consolation. 'No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.'

Mere preservation, however, though a most comfortable, is not the only, hope of the Church; she has

(2.) The prospect of *increase.*

Increase—from an effectual blessing upon the means of grace in places where they are already enjoyed; for thus saith the Lord, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will

pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.'

Increase—from the diffusion of evangelical truth through Pagan lands. 'For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shall see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the gentiles shall come unto thee.'

Increase—from the recovery of the rejected Jews to the faith and privileges of God's dear children. 'Blindness in part has happened unto Israel'—they have been cut off, for their unbelief, from the olive tree. Age has followed age, and they remain to this hour spread over the face of the earth, a fearful and affecting testimony to the truth of God's word. They are without their sanctuary, without their Messiah, without the hope of their believing ancestors. But it shall not be always thus. They are still beloved for the father's sake.' When the 'fullness of the Gentiles shall come in,' they too shall be gathered. They shall discover, in our Jesus, the promised Messiah; and with tenderness proportioned to their former insensibility, shall cling to his cross. Grafted again into their own olive tree, 'all Israel shall be saved.' It was 'through their fall that salvation came unto us Gentiles.' And, 'if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?' What ecstasy, my brethren! the Gentile and the Jew taking 'sweet counsel together, and going to the house of

God in company!' the path of the swift messenger of grace marked, in every direction, by the 'fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ'—a nation born at once'—the children of Zion exclaiming, 'The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.' The knowledge of Jehovah overspreading the earth 'as the waters cover the sea;' and all flesh enjoying the salvation of God!

This faith ushers in a

(3.) Prospect of the Church—the prospect of *triumph*.

Though often desolate, and 'afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted,' the Lord her God will then 'make her an eternal excellency,' and repay her sorrows with triumph—.

Triumph—in complete victory over the enemies who sought her hurt. 'The nation and kingdom,' saith the Lord, 'that will not serve thee shall perish; yea those nations shall be utterly wasted. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.' That great enemy of her purity and her peace, who shed the blood of her saints and her prophets, the MAN OF SIN who has exalted himself above all that 'is called God,' shall appear, in the whole horror of his doom as the 'son of perdition, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.' The terrible but joyous event shall be announced by an angel from heaven 'crying mightily with a strong voice, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!' 'ALLELUIA,' shall be the response of the Church universal, Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of her servants at her hand!' Then,

too, 'the accuser of the brethren'—'that old serpent which is the Devil and Satan,' shall be cast down, 'and bound a thousand years that he shall deceive the nations no more'. This will introduce the Church's Triumph—in the prevalence of righteousness and peace throughout the world.

'Her people shall be all righteous.' The voice of the blasphemer shall no longer insult her ear. Iniquity as ashamed shall stop its mouth, and hide its head. 'All her officers shall be peace, and all her exactors, righteousness. 'The kings of the earth brining their glory and honor unto her,' shall accomplish the gracious promise, 'The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness.' Her prince whose throne is forever and ever, 'shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.' Every man shall meet, in every other man, a brother without dissimulation. Fear and the sword shall be far away, 'they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid.' For thus saith the Lord, 'Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy wall, Salvation, and thy gates, Praise.'

Triumph—in the presence of God, in the communion of his love, and the signal manifestation of his glory. 'Behold the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.' Then shall be seen, 'the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God,' which 'shall have no need of the sun, neither of the moon,' to shine in it; for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof. And the

nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it,---and they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it; and there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.'

Such, according to the sure word of prophecy, will be the triumphs of Christianity; and to this issue all scriptural efforts to evangelize the heathen contribute their share. That mind is profane, indeed, which repels the sentiment of awe; and hard is the heart which feels no bland emotion---But let us pause---You exult, perhaps, in the view of that happiness which is reserved for the human race: you long for its arrival; and are eager, in your place, to help on the gracious work. It is well. But are there no heathen in this assembly? Are there none who, in the midst of their zeal for foreign missions, forget their own souls; nor consider that they themselves 'neglect the great salvation?' Remember, my brethren, that a man may be active in measures which shall subserve the conversion of others, and yet perish in his own iniquity. That very gospel which you desire to send to the Heathen, must be the gospel of *your* salvation; it must turn *you* 'from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God;' it must make *you* 'meet for the inheritance of the Saints,' or it shall fearfully aggravate your condemnation at last. You pray 'Thy kingdom come.' But is the 'kingdom of God within *you*?' Is the Lord Jesus in you, the hope of glory?' Be not deceived. The *name* of Christian will not save you. Better had it been for you 'not to have known the way of righteousness'---better to have been the most idolatrous Pagan---better, infinitely better, not to have been born, than to die strangers to the pardon of the Redeemer's blood, and the sanctifying virtue of his spirit. From his throne on high he calls; calls, my brethren to you, 'Look unto me

and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else. Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near; Let the wicked forsake his way; and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'

On the other hand, such as have 'fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them,' are commanded to be 'joyful in their king.' He reigns, O believer, for thee. The stability of his throne is thy safety. The administration of his government is for thy good; and the precious pledge that he 'will perfect that which concerneth thee.' In all thy troubles and in all thy joy 'commit thy way unto him.' He will guard the sacred deposit. Fear not that thou shalt 'lack any good thing.'—Fear not that thou shalt be forsaken—Fear not that thou shalt fall beneath the 'arm of the oppressor.' 'He went through the fires of the pit to *save* thee; and he will stake all the glories of his crown to *keep* thee. Sing then thou beloved, 'Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

And if we have 'tasted that he is gracious,' if we look back with horror and transport upon the wretchedness and the wrath which we have escaped, with what anxiety shall we not hasten to the aid of our fellow men, who are 'sitting in the region and shadow of death.' What zeal will be too ardent; what labor too persevering; what sacrifice too costly, if by any means, we may tell them of Jesus, and the resurrection, and the life eternal! Who shall be daunted by difficulties, or deterred by discouragement? If but one Pagan should be brought, savingly, by your instrumentality, to the knowledge of God, and the kingdom of Heaven, will you not, my brethren, have an ample recompence? Is there here a man who

would give up all for lost because some favorite hope has been disappointed? or who regrets the worldly substance which he has expended on so divine an enterprise? Shame on thy coward spirit and thine avaricious heart! Do the Holy Scriptures, does the experience of ages, does the nature of things justify the expectation, that we shall carry war into the central regions of delusion and crime, without opposition, without trial? Shew me a plan which encounters not fierce resistance from the Prince of Darkness and his allies in the human heart, and I will shew you a plan which never came from the inspiration of God. If Missionary effort suffer occasional embarrassment: if impressions on the heathen be less speedy, and powerful, and extensive, than fond wishes have anticipated: If particular parts of the great system of operation be, at times, disconcerted; if any of the 'ministers of grace' fall a sacrifice to the violence of those whom they go to bless 'in the name of the Lord;' these are events which ought to exercise our faith and patience; to wean us from self sufficiency; to teach us where our strength lies, and where our dependence must be fixed; but not to enfeeble hope, nor relax diligence. Let us not 'despise the day of small things.' Let us not overlook, as an unimportant matter, the *very existence* of that Missionary spirit which has already awakened Christians in different countries from their long and dishonorable slumbers, and bids fair to produce in due season, 'a general movement of the church upon earth.' Let us not for one instant, harbor the ungracious thought, that the prayers, and tears, and wrestlings of those who 'make mention of the Lord,' form no link in that vast chain of events by which he will establish, and 'will make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' That dispensation which of all others is most repulsive to flesh and blood, the violent death of faithful missionaries, should animate Christians with new resolution. 'Precious in

the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.' The cry of mayrtyred blood ascends the heavens; it enters into 'the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.' It will give him no rest till he 'rain down righteousness' upon the land where it has been shed, and which it has sealed as a future conquest for him who 'in his majesty rides prosperously because of truth, and meekness and righteousness.'

For the world, indeed; and also for the church, many calamities and trials are in store, before the glory of the Lord shall be so revealed, that 'all flesh shall see it together.' 'I will shake all nations,' is the divine declaration, 'I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.' The vials of wrath which are now running, and others which remain to be poured out, must be exhausted. The 'supper of the great God,' must be prepared, and his 'strange work,' have its course. Yet the Missionary cause must ultimately succeed. It is the cause of God, and *shall* prevail. The days, O brethren, roll rapidly on, when the shout of the isles shall swell the thunder of the Continent: when the Thames and the Danube, when the Tiber and the Rhine, shall call upon Euphrates, the Ganges, and the Nile; and the loud concert shall be joined by the Hudson, the Missisippi, and the Amazon, singing with one heart and one voice, Alleluia! Salvation! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

Comfort one another with this faith, and with these words,

Now, 'Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: *and let the whole earth be filled with his glory!* Amen and Amen!

A SERMON

BY

DAVID OSGOOD, D. D.

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JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

ON the death of Moses, Joshua his favorite minister succeeded to the supreme command over all the tribes of Israel, and was constituted their head and leader. Under his conduct they passed over Jordan, attacked the nations of Canaan, and in the course of a few years, made a complete conquest of the country. This renouned general and ruler presided in the partition of the lands, and in settling their civil and religious polity. Through the whole of these great transactions, he approved himself to God and his people, exhibiting all those noble qualities of heart and understanding which rendered him worthy of his high station. When some years had elapsed, and Joshua was now advanced in age, and the time of his departure was at hand, he gathered all Israel to Shechem, that he might give them his farewell discourse, his last, solemn, dying charge. A scene more striking rarely occurs in history. How august was the assembly of a great nation, with its Elders, Judges, and officers, civil and sacred, all attending the man who had rendered them such various and important services! They now behold for the last time, the Hero, who had been foremost in every danger, leading their armies to battle through many successive campaigns, and under whose conduct, they had become masters of one of the finest countries in the

world, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.' Their eyes are fixed on the venerable patriot, whose noble disinterested exertions, whose wisdom and counsels had established them in the quiet possession of liberty, peace and plenty. Their attention is summoned by the aged prophet, who had long been the oracle of the Most High unto them, who had taught them the good knowledge of God, and how to serve him acceptably: This prophet now addresses them with his last message from the Almighty, Was it possible for them not to be affected with the farewell discourse of one to whom they were under such manifold obligations? They were affected, and at no time did this people discover a temper more susceptible of good impressions, than was that exhibited on the present occasion.

In a nervous and pathetic address, Joshua recapitulates some principal events in their history, in which the arm of the Almighty had been made bare on their behalf. He reminds them of their small original, and of the divine favor and protection to their progenitors, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob down to the period when the family became resident in Egypt. He sets before them an account of the signal interpositions of heaven in their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage; the wonders wrought for them during their progress through the wilderness, and while making a conquest of Canaan and getting possession of that good land. Having endeavoured to warm their hearts with a sense of these blessings from Jehovah, he comes to the main point, which is, to fix them in a steady adherence to *his* worship, and guard them against every species of idolatry. With great earnestness and affection he applies to them, 'Now therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth;' adding in the verse of which the text is a part, 'And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve;

whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell.' We are not to conclude from these words, that Joshua was apprehensive that the people were at this time actually wavering in their opinion concerning the object of their worship. He speaks like an orator; he invites them to choose, merely because he supposes the choice already made. Just as if he had addressed them thus; 'put away from you every object of idolatry, and determine to serve the Lord only. Ah! whom will you serve, speak candidly, whom will you serve, if you refuse him your homage? Where could you hope to find a God, worthy to be compared with him? If the worship of those gods which your ancestors worshipped beyond the Euphrates, hath the sanction of antiquity; ye know on the other hand, that Abraham openly abjured that worship, that from his heart he renounced those idols, and that thereby drawing upon him the benediction of the Most High, he obtained from his munificence, as his inheritance, the country of which you now have taken possession. As to the gods of the Amorites, I know you are convinced how despicable those impotent idols are, whose worshippers ye have subdued. Yet make your choice however. Nothing should be more free than the preference given to a religion. But know, O Israelites! the choice of Joshua no longer remains to be made; *I and my house;* I and all my family, if I am master of it, *will serve the Lord*, and remain faithful to him even to death.'

Such was the pious resolution of this great and eminent personage; and thus firmly was it expressed, with an air, a voice and looks---all bespeaking his glowing zeal for God and his affectionate concern for Israel. The large and solemn audience heard him with attention, felt the force of his words, and in a kind of religious transport, exclaimed 'God for-

bid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods---we also will serve the Lord for he is our God.' How happy was the preacher in being able thus to impress the sentiments of his own heart on the hearts of his hearers, and in bringing them into the same resolutions with himself, to avouch the Lord to be their God, and to a solemn promise of fidelity to him!

Joshua's example, as the head and master of a family, is now, my hearers, proposed for our imitation; and to persuade those of you who sustain a similar relation, to come into his views and adopt his resolution for yourselves and families with respect to the service of God, is the design of the present discourse. What the service of God was under the law, none, who are acquainted with the writings of Moses, can be ignorant. Under the gospel, the mode of serving him is different. No longer encumbred with manifold rites and ceremonies, with tedious forms of outward purifications, nor requiring costly oblations; it is plain and simple. In the direct and immediate sense of the text as applicable to ourselves, the service of God consists in our grateful acknowledgment of the true and living Jehovah for our God; in rendering him the homage required in his word, in calling upon him in our families and closets; in attending the public ordinances of his worship, in professing our faith in Christ, our regard for him as the medium of our whole intercourse with the Father and the basis of all our hopes; and in a course of persevering obedience to his precepts. As our whole duty is comprised in what Christ has enjoined, the service of God requires, that, in obedience to our constituted head and leader, we persevere in the practice of all the branches of piety, benevolence and sobriety, regulating our hearts and lives by the rules of the gospel, and exerting our whole influence to promote the interests of christian virtue and holiness in the world. In this comprehensive sense, every sincere christian

is devoted to the service of God, and firmly resolved to persevere therein to the end of life. That this should be the resolution of each one in this assembly is, in itself, a matter of the greatest and most weighty concern. It is however, especially incumbent upon those who preside as heads of families. Personal religion is essentially necessary in order to give rise to such a resolution as is expressed in the text, and to the keeping and fulfilling of it afterward: It is indispensably requisite to the right performance of those various duties to which an householder binds himself when he says, *as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!* Whatever of religion he here promises for his family, should be the fruit and effect of vital religion in himself. In order therefore, to the governing of a family in a religious manner, it is highly important,

That the master of it should himself possess the power of Godliness. Some indeed, who are strangers to vital piety, may yet, from worldly considerations, be induced to keep up the forms of religion in their families: but as their hearts are not engaged in such observances, it cannot be expected that they should be so steady, and exemplary in them, as the man who has entered into the spirit of religion and has a feeling sense of its reality and importance.—For the good of their families then, as well as for their own future and everlasting welfare, it is of the greatest moment that householders should be truly religious, and each one, with the good man in the text, resolve for himself in the first place, as for me, I will serve the Lord. What resolution can be more rational or more advantageous than this? Has not God every imaginable claim to our service? He made and upholds us in life, and is, every moment, pouring his providential bounty around us. But, what ought still more deeply to effect us, when we had undone ourselves and were sinking under loads of guilt and mise-

from his own self-moving compassion, he sent his son to recover and save us. 'We are redeemed not by corruptible things such as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ, who his own self bare our sins on the cross, and died for us, that henceforward we should live unto him.' In the view of these things must not every heart be convinced of its obligations to serve God, and melt in contrition for having neglected his service so long? Must not every bosom wax warm with the emotions of love and gratitude? Being bought with a price, must we not feel that we are not our own, that we owe ourselves and all the service in our power, to Him who has taken such measures for our happiness, and at an expense which angles cannot compute, has ransomed us from eternal ruin? Must not the heart of that man be exceedingly depraved, who feels not the constraining influence of redeeming love and grace, who still declines the service of God? Whom shall we serve, if we refuse to serve him? Into what certain and inevitable ruin are they hastening, who give themselves up to the service of their lusts, of sin and of the world? But what pleasure, honor and happiness may be expected from sincerity in the service of God! 'In keeping his commandments there is great reward. Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' Will you not then, my friends, especially those of you who are heads of families, come to a resolution to serve God? May I not hope that on fixed, and permanent principles, your hearts are now deliberately, forming the noble purpose, and in an humble dependence on divine grace, resolving that henceforth you will serve the Lord in sincerity and truth? Let me then,

In the next place, recommend the open and explicit profession of this your good resolution. So did Joshua in the text; and so, at his persuasion,

did the assembled tribes of Israel. Nor was it a new thing for them thus publicly to enter into covenant with God and bind themselves by the solemnity of an oath, to fidelity in his service. Their history furnishes many instances of similar transactions. From the New Testament also we have abundant evidence that it is the will of God, that all as they arrive to years of discretion, should openly profess their faith in Christ and devote themselves to his service. No small stress seems to be laid upon this by our Saviour when he says, 'whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. And whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he shall come in his own and his Father's glory.' As, 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; so with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' This confession was required by the apostles, of all who offered to join in the communion of the first christians. In opposition to such plain texts of Scripture and to the usage of the people of God in all ages, both under the law and under the gospel, is it not strange that so many among us can content themselves in the neglect of this duty, even after they have children about them, before whom a better example ought to be set?

Indeed, if young people were truly wise, and had a just sense of things, they would certainly give up themselves to God, and recognize their obligation to him who made, and to him who redeemed them, prior to their entering into engagements to one another. Before they think of changing their condition and encumbering their minds with family cares and anxieties, they are called by the voice both of reason and revelation to think seriously of their eternal concerns, and to come to a fixed resolution about them, by explicitly taking Christ's yoke upon them and binding themselves to the observance of all his institutions. By so doing, they would launch forth into the world, and

begin the voyage of life, furnished with a compass and rudder. Mariners exposed to the winds and waves, destitute of these requisite instruments, are in a situation less perilous than those young persons, who begin the world without any fixed principles of religion. My young friends, whatever your temporal success may be, yet, if in the end, you shall fail of reaching the haven of everlasting rest, you had better never have been born. Let me entreat you to fix your thoughts upon this great and awful concern; and whatever else you may neglect, neglect not, O neglect not, 'the one thing needful!' Hasten, hasten your choice of that 'good part which shall not be taken from you.' Having made your choice, bind yourselves to adhere to it, by openly avowing it in the face of the world. By thus becoming and professing yourselves the servants of God, you will lay a proper foundation for exerting your influence over others. When you shall have families, you will be qualified to preside over them with dignity and comfort to yourselves, and with advantage to them. The influence of the resolution which you have formed for yourselves, will be extended to those, whom providence may place under your care, and afford a degree of security that they also will serve the Lord.

On your becoming parents, it will be your first care to give up your children to God, not only by acts of devotion in private, but by having them publicly baptized into the name of Christ, and thereby dedicated to his service. That this is one of the first duties of parents to their offspring, has been believed by the generality of Christians ever since the apostolic age.

As we know that, of old, God required the seal of his covenant to be applied to the children of his professing people; that the great Author of the gospel dispensation has been so far from excluding them from this new covenant, that he has explicitly numbered them among his visible subjects; that his

apostles have dignified them with the titles of saints and disciples; and actually baptized them on the professed faith of their parents—to me it is wonderful, how any can doubt whether it be the will of God that parents should in this way, dedicate their children to him and his service. It is with great concern, my brethren, that I see such numbers among us living in the neglect of this duty. It is not indeed, neglected by those of you who have professed your resolution to serve God. But, are all the others unresolved upon this subject. Are you still wavering and undetermined whether to serve God or not? Are you still halting between two opinions? Alas for you! Has not the matter been under consideration long enough already? If you are not yet convinced of the propriety, reasonableness and advantage of serving God, what further light or new arguments can you expect? When will you come to a conclusion? If you can feel easy and unconcerned in your present situation, and while you live on in the neglect of Christ's institutions, neither devoting yourselves nor your children to his service, you must be left to abide the consequences of manifest disobedience to the divine authority. I turn to professors.

My brethren, if you are sincere in your profession, you will not content yourselves with having dedicated your children to the service of God; it will be your next care to instruct them how to serve him, teaching them the principles of that religion into which they have been initiated. To 'train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' is the express injunction of the gospel, and has been the endeavor of religious parents in all ages. To the faithfulness of Abraham in discharging this duty, God himself testifies when he says, 'I know Abraham, that he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment.' His example cannot but be imitated by

all who are of his character. If you believe that there is a God, that his favor is life and the source of all happiness to his creatures; will you not instruct your children in this most interesting truth, teaching them betimes the good knowledge of their Creator? If you have a just sense of the depravity and corruption of human nature, and of the need we all stand in of being cleansed by sanctifying grace; will you not endeavor to awaken in the consciences of your children a conviction of the necessity and importance of this great moral change, and travail in pain for them till Christ be formed in them, and they are born again of his spirit? If your own hope of salvation be founded on Christ, will you not hold him up to their view in all those characters and offices which he sustains as Mediator, and earnestly recommend him to their esteem, their love, their trust and obedience? If you have yourselves experienced 'the ways of wisdom to be ways of pleasantness,' will you not endeavor to lead your children into these delightful paths, and earnestly wish and pray, that they may largely participate of the noble and refined pleasures of true religion? In fine, if you believe that there is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for all the faithful servants of God; with what anxious concern will you endeavor that your own families may be of the happy number, and belong to the family of heaven! With what diligence will you instruct them in the service of the Most High, in all the various branches of their duty, teaching them how to live and walk so as to please God!

In doing this, much prudence will be requisite. Your instructions should be adapted to the age and capacities of your children. It should be conveyed in easy and familiar language, and illustrated by apt and striking representations. It should be often repeated, drop as the rain, and distill as the dew on their tender minds. 'These words,' says Moses to

the Israelites, 'which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them dilligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' The occasional dropping of religious sentiments in the hearing of children, though there be no direct address to them, has a good tendency, and is sometimes exceedingly useful. The religious parent will watch for opportunities to instill sentiments of piety into their minds, and will improve those seasons when any awakening providence or remarkable event has disposed them to be more thoughtful than usual. If he observes them to be under any serious impressions, he will endeavor by every suitable mean, to render those impressions lasting, to fix their wavering resolution for the service of God, and stir them up to their duty, by all the awakening motives of the gospel. Beginning with the most plain and simple truths, you should endeavor gradually to lead them on, as they may be able to follow, to further and more enlarged views of the doctrines and duties of our holy religion. Their memories however ought not to be overburdened; and nothing should be unnecessarily imposed which may lead them to consider religion as a task. Much of your success will depend upon your conciliating their good affections, and so managing your instructions that they may listen to you with pleasure. This will probably be the effect, if you can let them see that their good and happiness are the objects of your solicitude. Let some little premium occasionally reward their diligence and attention. Commendation and praise for improvements already made, will whet their ambition, and excite emulation in making further progress.

As the religious householder will be thus dilligent in teaching his family in private, so it will be his care

that they regularly attend upon public instruction and the several means which heaven has appointed for our growth in the knowledge of God, and of our duty. This is a special part of that service which we owe to God, and which he, at a stated season, expressly requires. To instruct both parents and children in the doctrines and duties of the gospel, the standing ministry of God's word is appointed. On this ministry, at the seasons set apart for divine service, every family ought to attend. If the master of a house be himself truly religious, he will not suffer any under his care to be unnecessarily absent. If a passion for rambling or novelty tempt a child or a servant to distant and various places of worship, such irregularity upon the Lord's day, will be frowned upon and checked by the householder, who has any mixture of wisdom with his piety. He will never approve of such disorderly behaviour. Much less will he himself set so ill an example. It is but a poor character which the scripture gives of those who have itching ears and are always ready to turn their backs on tried and faithful instructors, to follow strangers. These are unstable souls, light and empty minds. The judicious christian is incapable of such levity and caprice. He moves on in one steady uniform course of goodness, and his authority is exerted in preserving order and regularity in his family. At the hour of divine worship, he appears in his place at the head of his household. He watches the demeanour of the younger branches, that they may be serious and attentive. They know that when the services of the day shall be over, some account of what they have heard will be required. This excites their attention, and puts them upon taking pains to treasure up divine instruction. Visits and social intercourses for the purposes of amusement, are resolutely avoided on this day. The Sabbath is not only begun and closed with the exercises of secret and family worship; but the whole

day is regarded as sacred to religious improvement.

Nor is it on the Sabbath only that the religious householder engages in the immediate service of God; he has every day his stated seasons for devotion. He is regular in offering up the morning and evening sacrifice, both in his closet and in the presence of his assembled family. On these occasions no member is permitted to be absent without some just excuse. Their minds are improved in religious knowledge, and prepared for the more solemn exercises of devotion, by the previous reading of some portion of scripture. In all the families where the resolution of Joshua is adopted, these services regularly performed, preserve order and decorum, cherish the principles of piety, and promote the practice of the social virtues, accompanied with harmony and love, joy and peace. Hence such houses become schools of virtue, temples of devotion, and nurseries for heaven.

Ye heads of families, thus to preside in your houses, you are bound by all the regard which you owe to God. If you believe in him, you must be sensible that all your social as well as personal comforts are derived from his munificence. His providence led you into those tender connections which have issued in a hopeful offspring, like olive plants surrounding your table. Your table itself is daily spread by his bounty. He blesseth the works of your hands, and giveth you richly all things to enjoy. If you have comfortable accommodations for your families and the means of supporting them—all are from him, and you are continued in the possession of them from day to day by his guardian care. Laban, with an air of ignorance, said to Jacob, 'These daughters are *my* daughters, these children are *my* children, these cattle are *my* cattle, and all that thou seest is *mine*.' But with what perfect propriety, ye householders, does the great God address you in this style, remind-

ing you that all you have, your families, your possessions, and even yourselves are his? Knowing then, your entire dependence upon him, must you not feel your obligations to love and serve him, to use all your influence and authority in your own house, that your families may love and serve him too? How fit and reasonable, how well-founded are these his claims upon you? Can you, dare you withhold from him the tribute which he demands for the blessings of which he has put you in trust, and the possessions which you hold of him? In the tabernacles which the Lord hath pitched for you, will you not erect alters to him, and daily render him the oblations of prayer and praise? Will you not give back to him by an early and solemn dedication, the children you receive from him? On the birth of every child in your family, the voice of his word and providence to you is, 'take this child and nurse it for me.' Will you not accept the pleasing charge from your heavenly Father, and be faithful in training it up for him in the ways of virtue and holiness.

To this and the other branches of family religion, I would further urge you by all the regard which you feel for your families. Possessed of that affection which is natural to the conjugal and parental relations, you exercise a constant and a tender concern for the interest and comfort of your families. This concern influences you in the management of your temporal affairs, and puts you upon the exertion of all your skill and abilities in providing, each one, for his own house. You look upon your children, and seeing your own features in them, you consider them as parts of yourselves, and are tenderly solicitous for their welfare. Helpless, *they* look up to you for support; defenceless, they fly to you for protection: they cling around you and think themselves safe under your paternal care. You cannot disappoint their confidence. You cannot resist the feelings of nature

towards them. The idea of their being exposed to danger, or of their falling into wretchedness, harrows up your bosom. Whatever is within the compass of your abilities you will do, to procure their safety and their comfort.

Your care for them is not limited to the providing for them in their present state of minority; It throws your thoughts forward, and leads you to consider how you shall introduce them into the world under such advantages, as may afford a prospect of their passing respectably through it; if not of their rising to wealth and honor, yet of their possesing situations which may be easy and comfortable. This care prompts you to give them such an education as may qualify them for the stations which it is expected, they may hereafter fill, or for the callings and employments for which they are intended.

But, my brethren, as christians, must not your natural affections, your reason and your piety, all conspire to produce in you a further and a more important care still—a care for their future and everlasting well being? Looking upon your children as candidates for immortality, as having a part to act in the present world that will be followed with everlasting happiness or misery in the next; and knowing that unless they be interested in Christ and through the influence of a lively faith in him, approve themselves the sincere servants of God, there can be no hope; and apprized of the danger they are in of neglecting Christ and salvation through the depravity of their nature, the lusts of the flesh, the snares of the world and the temptations of satan; sensible of all these things, must you not feel an anxiety for their souls incomparably greater than any concern you can have for their temporal welfare! Overburdened with this anxiety, must you not wish to lighten its weight upon your own mind by devolving it upon One able to do for your children more than you can ask or think?

Must you not feel yourselves constrained to engage for them, if possible, the assisting grace of God, by an early dedication of them to him through Christ, by instructing them in his service, by watching over their morals, by praying with and for them, by setting holy examples before them, by doing every thing in your power to guide them into the way of salvation that their feet may take hold on eternal life? Do you not feel a horror at the idea of their missing of salvation through your neglect? can you be reconciled to the agonizing apprehension of seeing them lead an irriligious life in this world, and in the next, sinking under accumulated guilt into irrecoverable ruin? There have been instances, I admit, of children who, after the best religious education, have proved graceless; also of others who, after having been unnaturally neglected by their earthly parents, have yet, through the compassion of their heavenly Father, been plucked as brands out of the burning and made the trophies of victorious grace. These however, seem to be deviations from the common methods of providence. In general, the saying of the *wise man* is verified, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' God having ordained means for transmitting religion to posterity and securing a godly seed, his blessing so generally attends his own instructions that there is abundant encouragement for our observance of them.

I would therefore further press you to an imitation of the example in the text by the regard which you owe to your own country. If our happiness, as a people, depend upon the continued favor of the Almighty; in what way can we hope for the continuance of his favor, but by our being sincere in serving him and approving ourselves to him a peculiar people zealous of good works? But this cannot be the character of the people at large, unless it be first

the character of families; those smaller societies of which the greater community is composed. For the good of his country therefore it concerns every householder to resolve, that 'as for him and his house thy will serve the Lord.' In proportion as this resolution is carried into effect by heads of families, we shall become such a people as God will delight to bless. Besides its moral influence, it will have a natural tendency to render the state of the public, prosperous. Religion is one of the strongest bands to hold society together, and the main prop of civil government. When this fails, and profligacy and want of principle becomes general, the wheels of government are soon embarrassed, and sometimes break in anarchy and confusion. It cannot be expected of a people who have cast off the fear of God, all regard for his authority and laws, that they will pay such respect to human laws, especially in republican governments where the law makers are the creatures of the people. Without religion, such governments cannot be long supported. Be entreated then, as you tender the liberties of your country and wish its prosperity, to fear and serve God in your houses, instilling principles of virtue and piety into the minds of your children, and so training them up, that, as they come forward to act their parts on the great stage of life, they may have wisdom and integrity as legislators, fidelity and uncorruptness as magistrates, loyalty and obedience as subjects, charity and benevolence as neighbours, and all those virtues and amiable qualities which make good and useful members of society.

Lastly, to this let me urge you by all the concern which, as christians, you feel for the church of God and the continuance and success of religion among us. It is from *your* families that the church expects the supply of its members and the repair of the waste made by death; and, woe be to you! if through the

neglect of religion in your houses, there shall be none qualified to become pillars in the house of God. The present prospect in this respect, is truly melancholy. The generation who have passed the meridian of their days, are hastening, one after another, to the house appointed for all the living. What a large proportion of those who, not long since, were the most distinguished characters in this church are gone already! Every year thins the number of communicants. Compared with the whole assembly, it is but a small remnant who join in keeping up the memory of the Saviour's death. Nor are the places of those who are gone, supplied by the addition of new members. The seats of deceased fathers of the gospel feast, in many sad instances, remain vacant; while their children who have succeeded to their worldly possessions, leave it as yet uncertain whether they will inherit their piety and regard for religious institutions. What will be the ultimate issue of the present indifference with respect, not only to the power, but even to the forms of Godlines among us, heaven only knows. Sure I am, that all who are Israelites indeed, have just ground for concern and painful apprehension for the Ark of God. May He with whom is the residue of the spirit, who is able in a spiritual, as well as in a literal sense, to turn dry ground into water-springs, and cause the wilderness and solitary places to flourish and blossom as the rose—may He pour forth so plentiful an effusion of his spirit and grace both upon you and your children, that they may grow up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses; that instead of the fathers there may be the children through successive generations!

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME